

Disclaimer! I do NOT own these characters, and I kinda own the plotline, I guess, though it has been used many times before, I can assure you of that, because there is a C2 based off these fics.

A little boy of about seven years crashed into her and fell to the ground. He looked up at her, at the look of surprise on her face. It got him worried; he was used to surprise turning into anger, which turned into pain. She looked strict. He sniffed.

"I'm sorry, ma'am, I didn't mean to run into you. Really, I'm really sorry. I hope I didn't make you angry, and I'm sorry if I did." He said at a very fast pace. She kneeled down, taking his hands.

"It's all right. I know you didn't mean to. I'm not angry. Don't be sorry." She looked into his bespectacled eyes. "What are you doing here?"

"I don't know, ma'am. This man brought me here. He gave me to this lady who held up a stick. I was scared, so I ran away. I'm sorry."

"Don't apologize. W-why do you keep apologizing so much?"

"When I do something bad, my aunt and uncle get angry. If I don't apologize, my punishment is worse." He said. He had been hanging his head through the whole conversation. His voice was very distant. Not to mention he was considerably underweight. He was shifting his weight more to the left, and it looked like his right leg was injured. His clothes drowned him. But she could still tell he was in pain. His face was bruised, and his shoulder kept twitching. Her light grip on his hand could feel more than a few broken bones.

"I'm not going to punish you, Harry."

He seemed astonished. Not so much that she knew his name, but that she refused to punish him for what he had done wrong. "But...I was bad. I ran away. Please, ma'am, punish me before my aunt and uncle find out. They'll be worse. Please?"

She wanted to cry. That's why she was there. He was begging for a punishment. His mind was definitely warped. "Harry, your aunt and uncle won't find out."

He shook his head. "They always find out."

"They won't. I promise you. And if they do, I'll protect you. Come with me, Harry."

He sniffed and looked at her. "Why do you keep calling me 'Harry'?"

"It's...it's your name, isn't it?"

He nodded. "Yes, but my aunt and uncle says I don't deserve a name. They haven't called me Harry...my whole life."

She softly caressed his bruised cheek. He drew back. It did not seem to hurt him; it was more that he was scared of the show of affection. "Harry, you deserve a name. You are a very special boy."

He shook his head. "No. I'm not good at anything. I get in too much trouble." He sniffed. Then he cried out in pain. She looked over him to see what had caused it. It only took a second; he had accidentally shifted his weight onto his right leg. She lifted him up. He looked up at her again.

"Better?"

"What are you doing?" He asked. "Why—why aren't you laughing? Isn't—Isn't it funny? Don't you think it's funny?"

She was especially confused by this, and found it even more confusing, because he was not laughing, and she did not know what was supposed to be funny in the first place. "Don't I think what is funny?"

"That I'm hurt. Everyone always laughs when I'm hurt. Why aren't you laughing? Isn't it funny?"

"Harry, dear, it's never funny when anyone's hurt. You're really hurt." She said. He looked confused this time.

A woman came running down the corridor. "There you are!" She yelled, seeing Harry. "Thank you, Molly. He got away."

Harry pressed himself against Molly. "Please, ma'am. Don't hurt me." He begged, his eyes shut tight. Madam Pomphrey shook her head.

"No, Harry, I'm going to try to take the pain away. I won't hurt you. I promise."

He looked up at Molly. She smiled. "She won't hurt you. She's going to help you get better."

"But then I'll just get hurt again."

"Harry, we're taking you away from your aunt and uncle. It's not the right environment for you. We're going to take you to a place where you will be safe." Molly assured him. Harry frowned, looking scared.

"Where?"

"You're going to stay here at Hogwarts until we find a place." Madam Pomphrey said. She reached out her arms, and Molly gave her Harry. "Come with me."

"Yes, ma'am." He said. Molly stopped her.

"Where is Albus?"

"In his office. Password is 'Fizzing Whizbee'." She said.

Molly nodded and smiled at Harry. "I'll see you later, dear. Stay safe."

As Madam Pomphrey took him away, Harry called, "Yes, ma'am."

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"Albus, where is he going to go?" She asked, pacing the office.

Dumbledore sat behind his desk, his eyes closed. He looked a little too calm. "Sirius is still in Azkaban. Remus will not always offer a

stable environment. The Longbottoms, needless to say, are out of the question, as is Peter Pettigrew. We cannot keep him in the castle. There are few choices left.” He sighed. “I suppose we could ask Ted and Andromeda Tonks, but I daresay they have enough on their minds with Nymphadora and both their jobs.”

“I’ll take him.” Molly said suddenly. Dumbledore chuckled softly.

“A very kind offer, Molly, but I simply can’t ask you to do that. You have enough on your hands.”

“Albus, I will. Arthur won’t mind. Harry and Ron will get along great.” She walked up to his desk. “Albus, I promised him he would go somewhere safe. He was so sweet, and very polite. But almost too polite to be a seven year old. He was scared when Poppy tried to help him. He basically begged me to punish him for getting scared. He wouldn’t stop apologizing for things that weren’t bad. He was so bruised. And when I picked him up, he was lighter than Ginny. You’ve seen how tiny she is!”

Dumbledore nodded. “I know. But you do not have to take him in.”

“I want to. Lily and James were a bit younger than me, but we were very close. I want to help their son in any way I can.”

Dumbledore sighed. “You can take him in.” He held up a finger. “One month. If I find a better place during that time, I will send Harry there. If not, you may keep him for as long as you find yourself able.” He paused. “If I do find him a new home, will you be able to give him up?”

Molly nodded. “I think so.”

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“How is he?” Molly asked Madam Pomphrey.

She sighed. “I put him to sleep while he heals so the pain isn’t as bad. But he was very hurt. His leg was shattered. I’m surprised he could walk on it at all. All the bruises should be gone within the week, I

gave him something for them. It was his arm that was the worst. All the bones were broken, and had been for I'm guessing close to a month. They just got worse and worse untreated. His hand got infected. It might be a little painful. Definitely not something that can fix itself overnight. And he's missing a lot of blood."

"What about...his weight? Did he just look so skinny because of his clothes?"

Madam Pomphrey shook her head. "He's very underweight. Malnourishment, Molly, it got the worst of him. It's one of the reasons he hasn't been healing as quick as he could. He doesn't have the proper vitamins. Between that and blood loss, he's close to anemic." She sighed. "Has Albus found him a home?"

Molly nodded. "Arthur and I will be bringing him up for at least the month. If Dumbledore doesn't find him a better home before the end of the month, we'll be his permanent foster parents."

Madam Pomphrey stared at her, incredulous. "Molly, you've got seven children. Are you sure you're up for the responsibility of another?"

"I want to do the best I can to help Harry."

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"W—what are you still doing here, ma'am?" Harry asked when he woke up to find Molly standing there.

"Harry, you don't have to call me that. You can call me Molly." She said. He shook his head.

"No. I'll get hurt."

"No one's going to hurt you anymore, Harry. I'll make sure of that."

"How?"

“You’re going to come live with me and my family at our house. We will make sure you’re safe. We won’t hurt you, and we won’t let anyone hurt you.”

Harry shook his head. “Thank you, ma’am. But I can’t let you do that. You’ve been very nice, and you’ve helped me a lot, but I can’t let you do any more.”

“Why not? Harry, I’ve barely done anything for you.”

He shook his head. “You’ve done a lot more than anyone else would have. You didn’t laugh at me when I got hurt. You tried to make it better. You’ve been trying to keep me safe. You and that man took me away from my aunt and uncle. That’s more than anyone else has done for me as long as I can remember. I shouldn’t bother you anymore.”

“Harry, all that means I care about you. And when you care about someone, you’ll do anything to help them. That’s what I’m trying to do by taking you to live with me. I’m just trying to tell you I care.”

“Well don’t!” Harry snapped. His voice got louder and sadder than Molly had heard it so far. “No one can care about me! That’s what my aunt and uncle told me! They says the only reason I was ever with them and not anyone else is because my mummy and daddy didn’t want me! Even my mummy and daddy hated me! Please, even if you think you care about me now, you really don’t. Eventually you’ll get sick of me. Then you’ll wish you’d never taken care of me. I don’t want to get you angry. So I’m not going.” Tears were rolling down his face.

Molly put her hand on his shoulder, but he pulled away, shaking his head. She sighed. “Harry, your aunt and uncle were wrong. People care a lot about you. I do. And your parents—they didn’t leave you because they didn’t care about you. They cared about you very much. They loved you more than their lives.” She paused. “They died. Almost six years ago.”

Harry looked up at her. He started crying harder. Then harder. Then harder. His wails filled the room and made Molly cry too.

"They lied to me?" He said after about an hour of just the two of them sitting there, crying. Molly nodded.

"They were very mean to you. They were doing things they shouldn't have been doing. That's why we took you away from them. Everything will get better soon."

He sniffed. "Why does my hand hurt so much?"

Molly sighed. "It was broken, and since it went untreated so long, it got infected. It might hurt a bit for the next few days."

He nodded and looked up at her. She smiled and wiped a stray tear off his face. He sniffed. "C—can I still go with you?"

"Do you want to?"

"Yes, ma'am."

A/N I know two thousand fics had been made about it, but I wanted to make my own version of it. So, here I am, proud number two thousand one. The beginning chapter was a bit short, I know, but the next will be longer, because he meets the rest of the family.

Disclaimer! I still don't own these characters. Unfortunately, no matter how much I write Santa asking for the rights to the Harry Potter series, he will not leave a contract under the tree. I don't think it'll happen this year. But I'm still writing those letters

A/N I am proud to say this is my second fastest-catching story. I already have close to twenty alerts and five hundred hits. That may not be impressive to some of you, but it's huge for me. So thank you even if you just clicked on my story. I guess being number two thousand and one is lucky.

"So, Harry, this is our house." She said. He smiled.

"It's cool. Is...is that a chicken?" He asked excitedly. Molly nodded. "Cool."

When they walked inside, Harry saw five people: one girl, four boys, all with flaming red hair, just like their mother. One boy looked in his early teens. Two boys looked exactly alike and about eleven years old. The last boy looked about his age, and the girl looked just a little younger than them, by about one or two years.

"Harry, these are my children. That's Charlie, he's fifteen" She pointed to the oldest one. "That's Fred. Or that's Fred. One of them is Fred, and the other is George." She said, pointing to the boys that looked exactly alike, who grinned identically. "They're nine. That's Ron, he's just a few months older than you." She pointed to the youngest boy, who waved insignificantly. "And that's my youngest and only daughter, Ginny. She's four, but very close to turning five." Ginny waved fervently. "Where are Percy and Bill?"

"Bill's showing Percy his fancy new Head Boy badge." Fred—or maybe it was George—said, rolling his eyes. "It doesn't even seem to interest Bill as much as it does Percy."

Harry, who had been counting on his fingers, was now gaping at Molly. "You have seven children?" Molly nodded. "My aunt and uncle says it was too much trouble raising just me and Dudley. How do you manage seven?"



“With a lot of help.” Charlie said with a chuckle. He wiped his hand on his jeans and stuck it out in front of Harry. “You must be Harry. I’m Charlie Weasley.”

Harry stared at Charlie’s hand for a long time before running behind Molly. “Harry, he’s not going to hurt you.”

All five children were staring at Harry like he was a Martian. “He’s going to hurt me. Yes he will.”

“I’m not going to hurt you Harry. I’m just introducing myself.” Charlie shrugged. Harry emerged from behind Molly, hanging his head slightly.

“Sorry, sir. I didn’t mean to make you angry.”

Charlie laughed. “I’m not angry. And you don’t have to call me ‘sir’. Charlie’s just fine.” But Harry shook his head. Charlie opened his mouth to respond, but Molly shook her head and he decided against it.

“Well, sit down Harry. You must be hungry.” Molly said. Harry shook his head before she had finished saying the word ‘hungry’.

“No.” He said immediately. “No, I’m not hungry.”

The Weasleys all exchanged looks. “There’s no need to be scared, Harry.” Molly said.

“Yeah, they haven’t poisoned it.” One of the twins said.

Harry was now shaking his head violently, making his dirty hair hit his dirty face. Molly made a note to clean him up as soon as he was done eating. “No. I shouldn’t waste your food. You should eat it, not me. I don’t need it.”

“Everyone needs food, Harry, you’re no exception.” Molly said.

“Who told you that you didn’t need to eat?” Ron asked.

"My aunt and uncle says that I didn't deserve to eat. If I did what I was told, they would give me some sandwich or pizza crusts." Harry said, like it was normal. Molly looked like someone had just whipped her in the face. She ordered Harry to sit down, and he did, though still reluctantly.

"Fred, George, could you go tell Percy and Bill that lunch is ready?" She asked them. They nodded and raced off. As she set a plate in front of Ron, she groaned. "Ron, what have you been doing? Your hands are filthy. Charlie, could you go help him wash up?" Charlie nodded and carried Ron by the ankles to the washroom. Ron was giggling and grinning. She looked at Harry and Ginny. "Will you two be okay alone for a minute while I go write to Albus that you're safe?" They both nodded.

Harry looked down at the food on his plate, picked up a fork, and then dropped it. Ginny laughed. "Here, like this." She smiled. He watched as she picked up her fork, stabbed something on the plate with it, picked it up, and brought it to her mouth. She then placed the prongs of the fork in her mouth and slid the piece of food off it with her lips and tongue. "See?" Harry did the same. He was very surprised at the taste of the food. It was not only the best thing he had ever tasted, but it was warm.

Ginny laughed again. "Why do you look so surprised?"

"Nothing." He mumbled.

"So you're Harry?"

He nodded. "Harry Potter. You're...Jenny?"

"Ginny." She beamed. He found it odd how happy she was. Even after he had just forgotten her name. "So you're seven?"

"Yes. I'm seven. Is Ron seven?" She nodded. "Well then we're the same age." She laughed again. She laughed a lot. She was much more cheerful than anyone he had ever met.

The twins came back down, followed by two more redheaded boys. One looked considerably younger than the other. The older looked to be in his late teens, the younger looked to be just a bit older than the twins.

"Hi, Bill! Hi, Percy!" Ginny piped. "This is Harry. Harry this is Percy," She pointed to the younger, whom he just noticed was wearing horn-rimmed glasses. "And this is Bill." She pointed to the older boy, who had very long hair tied back in a ponytail, and was very muscular. "Percy is ten, and Bill is seventeen. That's almost twelve years older than me! And ten older than you!"

One of the twins sat to the right of Harry, and the other sat across from him, to the left of Ginny. "Sorry about her." The one next to Ginny said, jerking his head toward her. "She's just learned how to do basic math. Very proud of herself."

Percy, who had sat at the distant end of the table from all of them, let out a loud, barking laugh that made Harry jump. "At least she's learned it young. Unlike you, George, who didn't learn it until you were seven." He said to the twin next to Ginny. Harry took a mental note of that.

"How many years have you been waiting to tell that joke, Perce?" Fred asked. Charlie came back with Ron on his shoulders. He dumped him in the chair to the left of Harry and sat across from Ron.

"Wait!" Ginny beamed, seeing her chance. "If George is nine now, and he learned when he was seven...two years!" George rolled his eyes. Molly came back into the room.

"Your father will be coming home early tonight." She said. "And Professor Dumbledore might be joining us for dinner."

"Why?" Ron asked.

"To make sure Harry is all right."

Harry shook his head. "You don't need to do that, ma'am. I'm fine. He shouldn't bother. He probably has his own things to do."

“Yes, he does, and one of those things is making sure you’re safe.” Molly said.

“Why am I a priority?” He mumbled. Bill leaned over.

“You’re more special than you think, Harry.” He whispered, almost like he didn’t want Molly to hear. Then he said louder, “Well tuck in then, Harry.”

He nodded and started to eat more. But after he had finished, he hesitated to ask for more. Molly frowned. “Are you still hungry, Harry?”

“Um...” He shook his head. “No, I can make it until tomorrow.”

They all stared at him again. “Tomorrow? Harry, we’ll be eating again in a few hours.” George said. Harry blinked.

“I—I know. You—you’ll give me some?”

Molly sighed. She looked over them, and saw that everyone was done eating. “Everyone upstairs. I want to talk to Harry.” They all walked upstairs, Charlie carrying Ron and Bill carrying Ginny. Once they were gone, Molly stood.

Harry ran to the other side of the room and huddled into the corner, covering his face and making himself small. He started to apologize at a rapid speed, telling her he’d do anything she wanted to make things right again. But when he finished and looked up, she wasn’t angry. She was staring at him, a concerned and scared look on her face. He moved his arms from his face and sat up, hugging his knees to his torso. She sat next to him and hugged him.

“You—you’re not angry?”

Molly shook her head. “You didn’t do anything to make me angry. I’m not angry at you. And if I ever am angry at you, I promise I will never hit you. Whatever your aunt and uncle did to you, most of it was wrong. Here, you can eat as much as you want. If you’re ever hungry,

feel free to get something from the cabinet or refrigerator. I'll show you what you can prepare by yourself and what you might need my help with. And I want you to know that we all care about you. Very much. We want you to be comfortable." She said. Harry nodded.

"But Professor Dumbledore doesn't have to come to see me. I'll be fine."

"I know you will, but he wants to check to make sure we all are comfortable. Speaking of that, I better show you to your bedroom."

She stood and took Harry's healthy hand to help him up. They headed toward the staircase, and upon reaching it, Harry headed, instead of up, to the side of it. Molly watched as he felt the side wall of the staircase, a perplexed look on both their faces.

"What are you doing, Harry?"

"Looking for my bedroom."

"You'll be staying upstairs."

He shook his head. "I—I don't sleep upstairs." He said, almost like he was afraid to do so. "I sleep under the stairs."

"What?"

"I sleep under the stairs. In the cupboard. So I can't get out when I've been bad." He said slowly. Molly had that look on her face again. He bet that Ginny couldn't yet count how many times she had that look since they met. It seemed to him that everything that had been normal to him at the Dursleys' was wrong to the Weasleys. "If I'm not sleeping in the cupboard, where will I sleep?"

"Well, we'll put you in with Ron for now. But we'll see if we can get you your own bedroom."

"My—my own? No, ma'am, I would be taking up too much space."

"You're never going to be doing that."

Molly took Harry's hand and led him up the stairs. Ron's bedroom was across from hers, next to Ginny's. Harry looked at Ron's room and jumped back. Molly had the look again. "What's wrong, Harry?"

"I'm really not supposed to be here." He said softly, as if to not disturb Ron. "Ron is in here. And he's got so many toys. My aunt and uncle says toys are illegal for—" He paused, then the color drained out of his face. He looked at the floor and mumbled, "—for people like me."

"Harry, tell me what they said. They won't find out."

He sniffed. "They says that toys aren't for freaks. And they says that I'm a freak. So I can't be here."

"You're not a freak Harry." Molly said.

"And even if you were, toys aren't illegal for anyone!" Ron yelled, appearing from behind the doorway.

"Ron!" Molly snapped. "What did I tell you about eavesdropping?"

He thought for a moment. "Um...that I shouldn't do it?"

"Why don't you put that memory to use once and a while? You know, when I haven't asked you too?" She said sweetly. Ron nodded, and she tickled him as he giggled.

"Hey, Harry, d'you want to play with me?"

He looked at Molly. "Don't I have to clean up?"

Molly shook her head. "Here, I do that. It's much faster. And also, you're just a child. You shouldn't be doing that. Now go play with Ron."

"Yes, ma'am." Harry nodded.

"That was an offer, not an order."

“Yes, ma’am. I’m sorry.”

“Stop calling me ‘ma’am’. That’s an order.”

Harry hung his head. Quietly, he said, “Sorry, ma’am. I can’t help it.”

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“Bill?”

“Yeah, Ginny?” He asked, dumping her on her bed, smiling. But then he started to frown when he saw Ginny wasn’t smiling. “What’s wrong?”

“Why is Mummy so worried about Harry? What happened to him?”

Bill hesitated, then sighed. “He—he had problems where he was before. The people he was living with were bad people. They weren’t nice to him. He’ll be living with us for a while, to give him a better opportunity.” He paused. “He might even be living with us permanently.”

“What did the bad people do to him?” Ginny asked. He was afraid she would ask that.

“Horrible things. So we have to be extra nice, so he knows that not all people are like that.” He said, kissing her cheek.

“When we were by ourselves in the kitchen, the two of us, he didn’t know how to use a fork. I had to show him.” She said. “Did the bad people do that to him?”

Bill nodded. “And more.”

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“Hello, gang!” Arthur said brightly when he entered the house. Harry took one look at him, dropped his fork, and jumped off his chair, running away. Arthur looked at Molly, who buried her face in her hands. “Why is he afraid of me?”

“Because—” All her children were there. “Come on, we need to get him back down here. He can’t afford not to eat.” They walked upstairs to Ron’s room. On the way, Molly explained.

“He’s afraid of you because his uncle has abused him for his whole life. Bill told me Ginny had to teach him how to use a fork. They’ve only fed him sandwich and pizza crusts, and even then just when he’s followed all their orders. He won’t stop calling me ‘ma’am’, was afraid of Charlie when he tried to shake his hand, called him ‘sir’, told me he’d take up too much space, tried to sleep in a cupboard under the stairs because that’s where he was sleeping at his aunt and uncle’s house, and wouldn’t play with Ron’s toys because his aunt and uncle had told him that toys weren’t for freaks like him. Oh, and when I give him lunch, he finishes one plate and tells me that he’s tided over until tomorrow. One plate! His right leg is shattered, his arm has been broken for months and gone untreated, and now his hand is infected. He’s iron-deficient and has lost so much blood he’s close to anemia.”

“Hasn’t his magic saved him from anything?”

Molly stopped and looked at her husband, her arms crossed. “He doesn’t know.”

“WHAT?!” Arthur roared. “He doesn’t know? They haven’t told him?”

“All they’ve told him is that they think he’s a freak! I had to tell him his parents died! He thought they left him because they didn’t want him!”

Arthur and Molly opened the door to find Harry’s head peeking out from under Ron’s bed. It immediately disappeared seconds later. Molly sat and pulled him out. “Harry, what are you doing?”

“Sometimes he won’t hit me if I’m not there.” Harry sniffed. Arthur walked over, sat on the bed, and put Harry on his lap. Harry squirmed, trying to get away. “Please don’t spank me, sir. Sir, I didn’t mean to.”

“I’m not going to spank you Harry. Promise. I won’t ever hurt you. That’s not what we do here. And what have you done to get me angry?”



Harry sniffed. "Well, I'm here. I've been playing with toys, and I haven't been cleaning up after everyone, and—and—"

Arthur hugged Harry. "That's what a seven year old is supposed to do. You should be playing with toys, and you should be leaving messes. It's normal."

Harry shook his head. "Not for me, sir."

"The normal you're used to is not a good normal."

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"Are you okay, Harry?" Ginny asked, her smile gigantic. If it got any larger, her face probably would be able to hold it.

"Yes. I'm sorry I ran, sir." He said to Arthur.

"Really, Harry, don't call me 'sir'. You'll be staying here for a while, just call me Arthur."

Someone knocked on the door. Harry jumped. Molly opened the door to find Dumbledore there. He smiled at Harry, who blinked.

"Hello, Albus." Arthur said. "We're about halfway through if you'd like to join us."

Dumbledore chuckled. "Oh, but I couldn't impose. Though I daresay it does look excellent."

"Really, Albus, we don't mind." Molly said.

"If you insist." He shrugged and conjured a chair. Harry stared in awe.

"H—how did you do that?"

Ron started laughing. "He's a wizard, of course!"

Harry started crying. "I knew this was a dream!" They all stared at him.

"It's not a dream, Harry." Dumbledore said. "I am a wizard. So are Arthur, Bill, Charlie, and as we know by now, Percy. Ron and Fred and George are probably wizards. And Molly is a witch, as probably so is Ginny. And you, you are a wizard."

"But—I'm younger than Ron. If you're not sure he's a wizard, how are you sure I am?" Harry asked. Dumbledore sighed.

Charlie gaped. "He doesn't know? He doesn't know—any of it?"

Harry looked around. "Any of what? I don't understand!"

Molly sighed. "Harry, we know you are a wizard because you have shown signs. Your parents—they were magic. They attended Hogwarts. Professor Dumbledore is the headmaster of that school. It's a school for witches and wizards."

"How do you know I am one?"

"Because..." Bill began. "I'll let Professor Dumbledore take this."

"Your parents were killed when you were one year old by a very Dark wizard named Lord Voldemort." All the Weasleys flinched, except for Ginny, who did not yet know about Voldemort. "He killed many people. He wished to live forever, and for ultimate power. He was not very fond of non-magical people, or people who were born from non-magical parents. During his power, he had many, many followers." He smiled. "That scar on your forehead. Did you ever wonder how it got there?"

"I—I thought my uncle did it to me when I was little. Too little to remember." He said, furrowing his forehead.

Dumbledore shook his head. "There is a curse. It is called the Killing Curse. Voldemort used this to kill your parents. He felt threatened. Not by them, but by you."

"But I was one years old."

Dumbledore nodded. "He was worried that when you grew, you would be able to defeat him. He wanted to kill you when you were young. Your parents died trying to save you. When Voldemort tried to kill you, his curse backfired. His soul was blown out of his body." He reached out and put a finger on Harry's scar. "But it left you with this."

Harry touched his scar. He was shaking. "How did I live?"

"Your parents risked their lives to save you and died trying to. The love they showed to you protected you better than any magic could."

Harry, tears running down his face, ran upstairs. Molly sighed and walked after him.

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"I'm sorry." Harry sniffed when she walked in.

"There's nothing to be sorry for, Harry."

He shook his head. "Yes, there is. I didn't believe you. I didn't believe you when you says that people cared about me. I didn't believe you when you says that my parents cared about me. You were right. My parents died for me. The only reason I'm alive is because they loved me and cared about me. I should have believed you. I'm sorry, Molly."

"Don't be sorry, Harry, I underst—did...did you just call me Molly?"

"You says I could." Harry said in a small voice, looking scared.

"And you can." She smiled. "Are you hungry?"

He nodded. "Yes, Molly."

A/N Bet ya didn't see that one comin'. But it came, man, and with vengeance.

“Ron? What’s Quidditch?” Harry asked that night. Ron looked at him like he was mad.

“What’s Quidditch? C’mon, I’ll show you.” For a long while, Ron and Harry talked about Quidditch. Harry, Ron noticed, asked more questions than even Ginny did. And that was an incredible feat.

“Wow...so do you play?”

Ron made a face. “Not really. Fred, George, and Charlie play, and they let me keep to get the sides even, but I’m not too good.”

Harry frowned. “I bet I wouldn’t be either. I’m not good at anything.”

“Sure you are!” Ron beamed. “You’re really good at asking questions. And you’re good at being different.”

“I never wanted to be different.”

“A lot of people are different!” Ron yelled. “But even the people who are different are different from each other. I wish I was different.”

“You are different. You’re the only person I know who has six brothers and sisters. And you’re different from all them. And your house is different. I bet you’re the only people who own chickens for miles. I’ve never even seen a real live chicken until I got here.”

Molly poked her head into the room. “Bed time, you two.”

“Oh, come on, Mum, five minutes?” Ron begged. Molly shook her head.

“I’ve already given you twenty.” She said. Ron groaned and walked over to his bed. Harry was taking the linens off the bed and arranging them neatly on the floor next to the camp bed. “What are you doing, Harry?”

“I—I don’t need these.” He said, looking at her like she was the insane one.

“Of course you do, Harry, you can’t just sleep on a mattress.”

Harry looked confused, shook his head, and pointed to the linens. She noticed he had arranged the blanket as a tiny, tiny mattress, then put the sheet on top. His pillow was still on the bed. Molly shook her head.

“No, you will not be sleeping on the floor.” She waved her wand and the bed made itself. “You will be sleeping in your bed.”

She helped Harry into the bed and tucked him in. Then she tucked Ron in. “If you need anything, we’re the bedroom right across the hall. Don’t hesitate. Have a good sleep you two, I’ll see you in the morning.”

XxXxX

“Arthur, he wanted to sleep on the floor. He even arranged his blanket and sheet into a tiny little sleeping bag. It was so sad. He didn’t even give himself a pillow.”

Arthur sighed. “The Ministry has given me time off to get acquainted with Harry.”

“Did I tell you he called me Molly?” She said.

He chuckled. “When I went in there to say goodnight, he called me sir. What did his uncle do to him? He’s like a robot.”

“Humans are creatures of habit, I guess. And seven-year-olds don’t exactly know what habits are good or bad.”

Arthur sighed. “He asked me why I bothered.”

“Bothered with what?”

“Well, I hugged him goodnight, and then he stared at me for a full minute before asking, ‘What does that mean?’.” Arthur shrugged. Molly gaped. He continued, “And then I told him that I was hugging

him because I cared about him and wanted him to know it. Do you know what he said to me?"

"I'm afraid to ask that question."

"He said, 'Mummies hug, daddies hurt.' When I asked him what that meant, he said that his aunt always hugged his cousin, but his uncle was always slapping his cousin on the back. He said that he did that to him, too, but Dudley was stronger, and he wouldn't fall."

Molly sighed. "It's going to take a long time to teach him you are not his uncle. I'm so sorry you have to do this."

Arthur smiled. "It's not either of our faults. I'm glad the Ministry gave me time off. Now, I can spend time with Harry. Whatever I can do."

"You might have to buy him a pony."

"Then I'm glad they're paying me for my vacation."

XxXxX

Harry was very uncomfortable lying on the bed. Well, he was comfortable, but it made him uncomfortable that he was. The day had been confusing. Everyone was happy to see him. The things he knew as normal were bad. Molly and Arthur let him play with toys. Ginny was so happy. They let him eat as much as he wanted. Arthur hugged him, and so did Molly, for that matter. They all cared about him. Professor Dumbledore even took the time to make sure he was settled.

The dinner rushed around in his head. He couldn't believe a word of it. A wizard? Him? It just didn't make sense to him. He had always been so...useless. Well, everyone had called him abnormal, and he supposed that if his aunt, uncle, and the people around them didn't have "wands" like the people he had met in the last two days, that they weren't magic. So, he was probably abnormal to them, but that would mean...

His eyes shot open. He needed to know. But he didn't want to wait. Reluctantly, he sat up and walked out of the room and across the hall. He knocked softly.

"Come in." Molly's voice said. Harry walked in. "Is everything okay, Harry?"

"Um...I was just wondering if—if my aunt and uncle...knew I'm a wizard." He said.

Arthur and Molly exchanged looks. "Well, your mum was your aunt's sister. When your mother was accepted into Hogwarts, and your aunt wasn't, your aunt started to hate your mother. And when your mum married your dad, and had you, your aunt...well, she knew that since both your parents were magic, you would be too."

"They knew?" Harry repeated. He started to cry. "Aunt Petunia hated—? Did—did she hurt my mummy?"

"What?"

"Did she hurt my mummy? Like they hurt me?" He asked, tears running down his face. Molly and Arthur stared at him, incredulous. "That's why they hurt me, right? Because I'm different? Because I'm a wizard?"

"Harry, we don't know why they hurt you like they did." Arthur said softly. "We're trying to figure that out."

He hung his head. "I'm sorry, sir."

Arthur sighed. "Harry, why do you insist on calling me 'sir'? I've told you that you don't have to call me that. And you call Molly by her name. Why don't you call me Arthur?"

Harry sniffed. "I could call my aunt 'Aunt Petunia' sometimes. But I could never call my uncle 'Uncle Vernon'." He looked around and flinched, as if expecting a chastisement for saying what he had.

"I'm not your uncle, Harry. I want you to call me Arthur."

“Why?”

“Because I want you to be comfortable with me. I want us to be friends. You don’t call your friends ‘sir’, do you?”

“I—I don’t know. I’ve never had any friends.” He said.

Molly smiled. “Well, you have nine now.” Harry smiled. “Do you want me to tuck you back in?”

He looked at his feet. “Um...no.”

“Are you okay?” Arthur asked. Harry shook his head.

“Ron’s room is too big. There’s too much scary stuff in it. And Ron makes funny noises when he sleeps.” He said. Molly smiled.

“Come here, Harry.” She said, standing and walking over to the closet. Harry followed. She pulled out an old teddy bear that looked like all the stuffing had been magically taken out of it. Harry stared at it intently. “This is Percy’s old teddy bear. It protected him from all the scary things. I bet it’s up for another challenge.”

She gave it to him. Harry frowned and gave it back to her. “Percy might need it.”

Arthur shook his head. “Percy’s in a room with Charlie now. He has Charlie to protect him. Charlie is much older and stronger than Ron and you are. You can’t fight off the scary things. That’s why you need teddy bears.”

Harry took the bear from Molly and hugged her legs. “Thank you, Molly.” He looked up at Arthur and bowed his head. “Thank you...Arthur.” Then he quickly dashed out before he could get in trouble. Arthur and Molly looked at each other.

“I’m going to need a long sleep.” Molly sighed. “But I know Ginny will be up at the crack of dawn.”



“I’ll take care of Ginny.”

XxXxX

Arthur awoke by the sounds of creaking, and looked at the clock to see it was only six in the morning. He got up and walked across the hall to Ginny’s bedroom. She was, as he guessed, grinning, and jumping up and down on the bed. Her hand was outstretched to try and touch the ceiling. “Having fun, sweetie?”

She grinned larger and let herself fall cross-legged onto the bed. “Do you know what time it is, Ginny?”

She shrugged. “I can’t tell time yet. You know that Daddy.” He walked over and kissed her forehead.

“How silly of me to forget.”

“Is Harry still asleep?”

“Everyone is.” Arthur chuckled. Ginny pursed her lips and touched her finger to them. He did the same. “Are you hungry?” She shook her head, her hair whipping her face. When she emerged, she was grinning again.

“Daddy?” She whispered.

“Yeah?”

“What happened to Harry’s hand? Why is it covered in bandages? Did it get sick?”

Arthur nodded. “He got hurt, but it wasn’t treated in time, so it isn’t healing fast enough. His hand is very sick.”

“Did Mummy kiss it?”

“What?”

“When my hand is sick, or when I hit my head, Mummy kisses it and it feels better. Did she try kissing his hand?”

Arthur lifted her and put her on his lap. “Unfortunately his hand is too sick for Mummy to heal with just a kiss. It would take a lot of kisses to heal it, and she doesn’t have that many. His hand can only heal with time, and maybe a bit of medicine.”

“How come Harry didn’t know he was a wizard?”

“Because his aunt and uncle never told him, and he doesn’t know the story about him and You-Know-Who. He hasn’t grown up around witches and wizards like you have.”

“Is that why Professor Dumbledore sent him here? So he could grow up around people like him?”

Arthur sighed. “No, Ginny, Professor Dumbledore sent Harry here so that he could live in a place where people care about him and love him and want to help him. No one paid any positive attention to him at his aunt and uncle’s house. They were very mean to him.”

“Why?”

“B—because he was different from them. They thought he was a freak because he wasn’t like them.”

“They were right.”

“What do you mean?”

“Harry is nicer than them. He doesn’t care if people are different, he’s still nice to them. And he doesn’t make fun of me like everyone else does. Bill said Harry’s aunt and uncle were bad people.”

“They were. Very bad.”

“So I’m glad he’s here.” She smiled. Arthur smiled and placed her back on the bed. “Daddy?”

Arthur now knew why Molly did not want to wake up for Ginny. She asked more questions in one hour than all her brothers asked in one day: combined. "Yes, Ginny?"

"Did Harry's aunt and uncle make his hand sick? Were they mean to his hand?"

She looked at him with such concern and curiosity. He couldn't lie. "Yes. They made his hand sick. But Harry doesn't like to talk about it. So can you keep a secret?"

Ginny nodded, then started jumping on the bed again. Arthur laughed, made a note to never put her in a room above anyone, and walked out, silencing the room to make sure no one else was woken up by her jumping. He went into Ron's room to peek on Harry. When he opened the door, Harry was wide awake.

"Good morning Arthur."

"Why are you up so early, Harry?"

Harry looked at him. "Is it early?"

"Yes, it's six in the morning."

"Is that early?"

He nodded. Harry looked at the blankets. "Sorry."

"Don't be sorry. You can't help when you wake up. I'm not angry." He felt like that was slowly turning into his most-used phrase. "Are you hungry?"

Harry nodded coyly. "I'll make breakfast."

"You don't have to do that Harry. I make breakfast."

"Really?"

“Yes. Making breakfast is not something a seven year old should do. If Ron tried to make breakfast he’d burn the house down.”

Harry nodded.

“Get dressed and meet me downstairs.” He said. Harry nodded and got out of bed.

XxXxX

“Harry, those are the same clothes you wore yesterday.” Arthur said.

He looked down at his clothes. “They’re the only clothes I own.”

“Because the rest are at your aunt and uncle’s?”

“No. Because I don’t have any other clothes.”

Arthur smiled. “That won’t work. We’ll have to get you some more clothes.” He set down a plate in front of him. “Eat up. I’m going to go get Ginny.”

When Ginny and Arthur came back down a moment later, Harry was already done eating, and helping himself to more. Ginny hopped over to the table as Arthur made a plate for her.

“Good morning Harry.”

“Good morning Ginny.” Harry said, noting that she was hyper and happy even in the morning. She would take some getting used to, that’s for sure. “Why are you awake so early?”

“For Ginny, this is sleeping in. She somehow can live on less sleep than anyone in the world.” Arthur said. Ginny grinned.

“And still be this overactive?”

“That’s me!” Ginny beamed. Harry started laughing. Then he flinched, stopped immediately, and went back to eating his breakfast. Ginny

tilted her head for a second, then remembered her promise to Arthur and ate her breakfast.

Percy was awake promptly at seven thirty, just as expected. He always set his alarm for seven thirty, and went to sleep at ten thirty. That way he got a completely even nine hours of sleep. His alarm sometimes awoke Charlie, and everyone in the house knew that if the sun was out, Charlie could not get back to sleep. This was the case on that particular morning. Charlie came down, tousle-haired and bitter, Percy strutting importantly by his side.

By ten, only Ron was still asleep. Harry asked them why he slept so much. Ginny answered that one. "Because he's lazy." She beamed. "He said that he doesn't think I'm human because I bounce around too much."

Harry laughed, and the twins commented on how stupid Ron was. Ginny beamed. "Let's go wake him up!"

"Won't he be angry?" Harry asked nervously. Ginny shrugged.

"He gets over it quick." She said. She took his hand and together they walked upstairs. Harry couldn't help but laugh when Ginny had to stretch to climb onto the bed. When she did, she stood, walked over to Ron's head, and tapped him with all her fingers. He sprang up so fast she was knocked off the bed. Ron grunted and fell back onto the pillows.

"I told you not to do that." He grumbled. Ginny smiled and stood.

"I know, but you were sleeping too long. And Mummy and Daddy were giving me the look they give when they want me out of the room, but don't want to kick me out." She shrugged, still smiling. Ron mumbled something and turned over. Ginny climbed back onto the bed and started jumping. She chanted, "Wake up, wake up, wake up." Harry watched in awe as she never skipped a beat and never sounded out of breath. She just kept jumping until Ron groaned and practically fell out of bed.

“Mummy and Daddy need to put you on some medication.” Ron said, because even though he was out of bed, she was still jumping. Harry followed her with his eyes as Ron walked out of the room.

“Come on Harry.” She said. “It’s fun.” She reached up to try and touch the ceiling, but was still about half a foot too short. Harry shook his head. “Come on. It’s fun.” She repeated.

“Won’t we get in trouble?” He asked. Ginny shook her head.

“As long as we don’t get hurt, and we don’t break anything.” She said, trying to do a flip. Harry looked around, then sighed and climbed on, which proved difficult when Ginny was jumping.

“Watch this!” She yelled, and she jumped as high as she could, then jumped over onto Harry’s camp bed. Harry, who had gotten quite a bit of air, instantly fell onto the mattress, dumbstruck.

“How’d you do that?”

“I’ve been trying for a long time in Percy and Charlie’s room. I put pillows all over the ground so Mummy and Daddy wouldn’t know and I wouldn’t get hurt, and I just made it yesterday.” She beamed. “Do you want to try?”

“No way.” Harry said. Ginny shrugged and climbed down from the bed. Harry did the same.

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“Molly? Harry has no other clothes than what he’s wearing.” Arthur said. Molly shrugged.

“We’ll get him some.” She sighed. “The more and more this goes on the happier I am that we went through with it. Harry was really in a bad place when he was with the Dursleys. They were horrible to him.” She shook her head. “Never had a friend. How does that happen? I just hope he’s getting along with everybody here.”

Arthur groaned. "By the way, we underestimate Ginny too much. She is way too smart."

"What does she know?"

"This morning she asked me if Harry's aunt and uncle hurt his hand because he was different from them."

"What'd you tell her?"

"I couldn't lie to her!" Arthur exclaimed. "I had to say something. So I told her that they did, but that Harry doesn't like to talk about it so she shouldn't bring it up."

Molly looked at him. "This is becoming much harder than I thought."

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A whole two weeks later. It had gotten so much easier. Harry was having fun. His leg was fully healed. All his bruises were gone. And his hand was the only thing still hurt, and it would take quite some time for the infection to go away, and then longer for it to heal fully. Everyone was used to having Harry around the house. Almost everything that had been normal to Harry at the Dursleys was revealed, and he had now gotten used to how things ran at the Burrow.

All the children were asleep, and Molly was up late, waiting for Arthur to come home from work. She heard a knock at the door, which was very odd considering the time. Just to be careful, she looked out the window before answering. She was devastated when she saw who it was.

"Albus, don't tell me you've found somewhere else." She begged. Dumbledore chuckled.

"Quite the contrary, Molly. The Ministry has ordered me to cease my search. Apparently Arthur told a few people about how well it's been going, and you know how word spreads. In fact, the Ministry has a

request. They would like your answer by the end of the week, if possible.” He said. Molly stared at him.

“Come in, Albus. Would you like some tea?” She asked. Dumbledore nodded.

“Yes, that would be excellent.” He said. Molly gave him a cup, sitting down across from him at the table.

“What is the Ministry requesting?”

“That you take in another foster child.” He said. He held up a hand as Molly opened her mouth. “Before you answer, let me tell you a bit about her. She’s grown up in a Muggle family, much like Harry, not knowing she is a witch. But we have been watching her for quite a while, and she is very sharp. Her parents are not as kind to her as they could be. In fact, they are very cruel. Her magic has been showing, and scaring them, making them crueler. By the end of the year, they suspect her to be in a horrible place, perhaps worse than Harry.” He sighed. “Of course, when we tried to talk to her about it, not a word would come out of her mouth.”

Molly sighed and put her face in her hands. “How old is she?”

“Seven. Just six months older than Ron, ten than Harry.”

She took a deep breath. “I will have to talk to Arthur about it.” She looked at her clock just as Arthur’s hand turned to “Traveling”, then “Home”. “Here he is now.” She said, standing and opening the door for him.

He smiled. “Albus? What are you doing here?” Then he realized. “No, you didn’t find Harry another home?”

Dumbledore shook his head. “The Ministry has stopped my search. Word has traveled of your hospitality towards Harry.”

Molly looked at Arthur. “They are requesting we take in another child. She’s a bit older than Ron and Harry, but she’s in a terrible way. She’s Muggle-born, and magic keeps escaping her and scaring her



parents. They suspect by the end of the year her case could get worse than Harry's was."

Arthur sighed, took off his cloak, and sat down. He drummed his fingers on the table and asked Dumbledore, "What's her name?"

"Hermione. Hermione Granger."

A/N I suppose that last part was a given. Who else could the 'sharp Muggle-born who's just a few months older than Harry and Ron' be? Oh, and by the way, yes, I am making the Ministry rock-bottom bastards in this so that the Golden Trio meets earlier on.

Disclaimer! I still do not own these characters. Christmas has come and passed, and nothing came saying I now own Harry Potter. Alas, I can still borrow for entertainment of myself and (hopefully) others.

"Everyone, we have an announcement." Arthur said the next evening at dinner. All the Weasleys and Harry looked up at him. "The Ministry heard about how much we've helped Harry, and they want...they request that we bring another foster child into our home. She is just a few months older than Harry and Ron, and she doesn't know she's a witch. Her parents are Muggles, and they're scared when magic escapes her, so they punish her for it. Your mother and I have talked about it, and we've decided it's up to you eight."

Ginny was first to speak. "I would have a sister! I say yes!"

Charlie shrugged. "It's been great having Harry around. And I hope we can help her like we've helped Harry." Fred and George nodded in agreement.

Percy and Bill both agreed. Ron shrugged. They all looked at Harry. "What do you say, Harry?"

He gulped. "I says that I know what it's like to be in that situation, and I don't want anyone else to be like that. So I want her to stay here." He said.

"Then it's settled. I'll tell the Ministry, and let's hope to get her as soon as possible. Her name is Hermione Granger."

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It was only two days later that Molly opened the door to find Dumbledore standing there. She looked around. "Where's Hermione?" Dumbledore turned around and laughed.

"Hermione, it's okay. Don't be afraid. Nothing will happen to you here. We brought you here to be safe." He said. Molly saw a little girl with bushy brown hair and big brown eyes hiding behind him. Her exposed skin had numerous bruises, and her face was dirty. Her arm

was in a sling, and her elbow was heavily bandaged. She looked terrified. Molly knelt down and smiled at her.

"Come in, dear. I'll introduce you to everyone." Hermione shook her head. Dumbledore shook his head.

"We took her from her home only last night. She still doesn't know anything. Hasn't said a word since I met her." He looked at her. "I'm very sorry to push this on you without telling you how drastic it is. She's harder to get to than Harry."

"Don't worry, Albus, we'll do everything we can." She said. "Come here, Hermione."

Hermione shook her head and backed away. As she did, she tripped and fell over the stair. Molly rushed over to help her up, but Hermione wouldn't let Molly touch her. She crawled away, getting even dirtier than she had been before. She ended up crawling behind a bush.

"Albus, why is she doing this?" Molly asked. Dumbledore sighed.

"Unfortunately, since she will not tell us, we can only guess. In Harry's case, he informed us of the problems. Hermione is not such a case. Would you like me to stay for a while?"

Molly shook her head. "I'll handle it."

"If you're sure." He Disapparated.

"Hermione? Would you please come out?" Molly asked. "No one's going to hurt you. Don't be afraid."

Slowly, carefully, Hermione emerged from the bush, a fresh cut on her cheek. Molly picked her up, and Hermione let out a cry, trying to squirm away. She carried her inside and put her carefully on the couch. Hermione, crying, stared at her, trembling, just as Harry came downstairs. Molly gestured him over, and he sat down on the couch next to Hermione.

"This is Harry. He's one of the reasons you were brought here. He's a foster child, just like you. And he was brought from a bad place to here."

"It's much better here, I promise. You'll love it." He assured Hermione, who kept crying, though softer than before. "Are you hungry? You won't get in trouble if you are."

Hermione looked at him, then, though reluctantly, nodded. Harry stood, and Hermione did the same. Molly walked into the kitchen and started cooking. Harry frowned at Hermione.

"Why don't you talk?" He asked. Hermione shook her head. "It's okay Hermione. Here you can talk. Nothing will happen. They don't hurt people here. They know that it's wrong. And you can call Mrs. Weasley Molly and Mr. Weasley Arthur. And Arthur isn't scary. He laughs a lot. Everyone laughs here. And you sleep in a bedroom, on a mattress."

Hermione sniffed. When she spoke, her voice had a struggling, hoarse sound to it, like she hadn't spoken in a very long time. "At my home I sleep on only a mattress. Everything else had blood on it, and my mummy won't wash it. But I don't want to use them because they remind me of getting hurt." She started crying again. "I want to go home."

Harry shook his head. "No you don't. I wanted to go home too. But now, I know that this is my home. I'm never going back to my old home again. And soon, you won't want to either."

"But I want to see my mummy and daddy. They're really nice when they aren't drinking that funny smelly stuff." She sniffed.

Harry looked at her. "Do you really want to go to a place where people are that might hurt you? Or do you want to stay here, where no one hurts you?" They stared at each other for a while. "I'll let you think about it. Right now, let's eat. Then you'll meet everyone else."

"How many people are there?"

“Without me, you, Arthur, and Molly, there’s seven. You’ll be staying with Ginny. At first she might seem annoying, but she’s really nice, and really funny, and really smart. You’ll have lots of fun with her.” He gasped. “Did I tell you that you can play with toys here?”

“W—what? And—and you don’t get in trouble? Mr. and Mrs. Weasley don’t take them away?”

Harry shook his head and directed her into the kitchen. “You can eat as much as you want. And if you’re still hungry, Molly will give you more. She’ll smile at you and hug you.”

“H—hug you?” Hermione said, sounding scared. “My mummy only hugged me when she wanted to hide that she was going to hurt me. Then she’d hurt my back or my head.”

“Not the Weasleys.” Harry said. They entered the kitchen, and almost instantly Hermione looked at her feet and shut her mouth tight.

Molly gave her and Harry each a plate. Ginny came skipping into the kitchen, and Molly looked at them all. “Will you three be all right if I go get the others?” They all nodded, Ginny’s grin looking like it was going to stretch her face like rubber.

“Hi. You must be Hermione. I’m Ginny.” She said. Hermione nodded.

“Hello.” Hermione said, staring at the plate of food. But Harry noticed her eyes were closed.

“Hermione, why aren’t you eating?”

“I have to wait for everyone else to start eating before I am allowed to.” She said. Then she looked up. “Right?”

“No, you can eat right now.” Ginny said. Hermione looked up at her for the first time, looking amazingly shocked.

“Why are you smiling like that?”

“Because I’m happy.” Ginny shrugged. Harry smiled at Hermione.

"She's always happy. After a while it's hard not to be happy when she's around." Hermione was shaking her head violently. "You can be happy, Hermione. And you can be sad, and angry, and you can be everything. No one will get angry at you if you show how you feel. That's why they brought you here. So you could grow up around people who support you. Or at least that's what Professor Dumbledore says to me."

"That man scared me. He took me from my mummy and daddy. He knew what happened in my house even when I didn't tell him and I hid all my owies." She said, just as Molly came in, followed by the rest of her seven children. Hermione shut her mouth and looked straight ahead.

"This is Hermione." Harry said. "Hermione, that's Ron, he's our age. That's Fred and George—I'm still not sure which is which—and they're nine, and that's Percy with the glasses, he's just turning eleven, and that's Charlie, he's fifteen. And then Bill is the oldest."

"He's seventeen!" Ginny exclaimed. She got most excitement from her seventeen year old brother.

Hermione just nodded. Ron frowned. "Doesn't she talk?"

"Yeah, she was just talking to me after—" Harry said, then stopped. "And then we—and then when—and she was—"

"Are we s'posed to understand any of that?" Fred asked. Harry shook his head and faced Hermione.

"Why don't you talk when Molly is in the room?" He asked. Molly looked hurt. Hermione shook her head. "It's okay. No one here minds when you talk or who you talk to. Just answer my question. Why don't you talk around Molly?"

Hermione shook her head again, tears forming in the corners of her eyes. Harry sighed. "Molly, I'm sorry, could you leave the room, just for a minute?" Molly nodded and left the room. "Now will you answer?" She shook her head, looking nervously at Bill, Charlie,

Percy, and the twins. They all exchanged looks, stood, and left the room.

As soon as they were out of earshot, Hermione basically vomited the words. "Every time I would talk around people who are older than me my parents would punish me. So I stopped speaking a long time ago. But they just found other ways." She said, tears running down her face.

"You can talk to people who are older than you. They won't get angry. And your parents won't find out. No one will hurt you for talking." Hermione nodded, but did not look convinced. Sure enough, when the others came in, her mouth closed tightly. "Hermione, it's—" He began, but she shook her head before another word left his lips. Everyone shook their heads and began eating. Hermione looked around to make sure everyone was eating, then lifted her fork and began to eat.

When they were all done, Hermione sat in silence waiting for everyone to finish. Slowly, everyone went upstairs, and she collected everyone's plates. Harry stopped her, telling her that Molly collected the plates and cleaned up when everyone was done eating.

She looked at Harry, then Molly, and walked away. Molly sighed and asked Harry to show her up to her bedroom.

XxXxX

"Is she here yet?" Arthur asked. Molly crossed her arms. "Oh no, what's the problem."

"She won't say a word. Harry tells me she will only talk when no one older than her is in the room. I haven't heard a word come out of her mouth. Only Harry, Ginny, and Ron know what her voice sounds like. It makes me want 'ma'am'."

"Why won't she talk around people older than her?"

"Take a guess, there aren't many chances of giving the wrong answer if you really assess the situation."

Arthur sighed. "Standing condition?"

"Her elbow is practically helpless, and Albus has told me she's had numerous head injuries in the last week. Oh, and as far as I can tell, her skin color is black and blue." She said, sitting in a chair across from him. "She only got here three hours ago. We ate, and then she went upstairs. Since then, she's been in Ginny's room reading."

"Reading? What's she reading?"

"Ginny said she didn't know. But she's been up there since, reading. I don't think it's human to read that much."

"It's not like she grew up in a place that supports humanity. For all we know she could be more robotic than Harry was." He sighed. "Hopefully we can rewrite her program."

"Hopefully." Molly sighed. "Why don't you go meet her?"

He chuckled. "I'm looking forward to it. Especially with how it turned out when I met Harry. At least he would tell us what's wrong."

"She'll nod or shake her head." Molly said, standing.

They walked upstairs to Ginny's room. Ginny wasn't in there, but Hermione was sitting on her camp bed, reading. She was halfway through the book. As soon as they stepped over the threshold, she shut the book, put it behind a pillow, and closed her eyes.

"Hermione?" Arthur said. Hermione, hesitantly, opened her eyes. "I'm Arthur, I just wanted to meet you. I'm Molly's husband."

Hermione nodded and closed her eyes again. Arthur looked over at Molly, who shrugged. Ginny skipped into the room.

"Hi, Daddy. Hi Hermione." She cheered. Hermione said nothing, but did open her eyes. Arthur bent down and kissed Ginny. Hermione blinked, flinching a little. She flexed the fingers on her broken arm, wincing a bit.



"Are you okay, Hermione?" Ginny asked, climbing onto the bed. Hermione nodded, her eyes closed again.

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"Have you gotten Hermione to talk around Mum and Dad yet?" Fred asked Harry, sauntering into Ron's bedroom with George on his tail.

Harry shook her head. "No. And she won't be talking around you two either."

"Not until she realizes we aren't like her family and won't punish her for talking." After seeing Harry and Ron's confused faces, George added, "We were listening at the door when you kicked us out."

Fred jumped. "Someone's at the door downstairs." He said, then turned to George. "Race you there." They grinned and ran top speed down the stairs.

Ron rolled his eyes. "They're really competitive. Sometimes they come up with their own rules so Ginny and I lose and they win."

"MUM! DAD! PROFESSOR DUMBELDORRE IS HERE!" They yelled from downstairs in unison.

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"Albus? What brings you here?" Arthur asked. Molly told the boys to go upstairs.

"There's a problem. The Ministry is ordering a custody trial for Hermione."

"What?" Molly said. "There was no trial for Harry, why do they want one for Hermione?"

"Harry's case was different. He told us that his aunt and uncle mistreated him. In these cases, we must trust the child. But Hermione

won't say a word, and without her information we can't be sure she was really in danger where she was."

Arthur groaned. "Wait a second. The Ministry asked us to take in Hermione, and now they want to take her away?"

"Are they really going to try to send her back to those horrible people? Why do they think she won't talk, because she fell off her bicycle?" Molly roared. She lowered her voice. "She will only talk around people younger than her because every time she spoke in front of her parents they hurt her. And the Ministry is risking that?"

"What happens if she shows up at Hogwarts and she won't say a single word? Then when she's there, she learns that it's okay? And then she'll have to go back! It'll be a vicious circle of pain and confusion. She has to learn now what's right and wrong." Arthur said. "Her parents obviously do not care about her like they should."

"Yes." Dumbledore sighed. "Fortunately she has confided in Harry, I at least presume?"

Molly and Arthur both nodded.

"He can testify, however I doubt they will believe a seven-year-old boy."

"What about a seven-year-old boy that knows exactly what it's like to be abused and can tell without even speaking to her that Hermione's a special case?" Arthur said. Molly turned around. They heard a gasp and rushed steps.

"What the—?" Arthur said as Molly jogged away.

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"Hermione?" Molly asked, walking into Ginny's bedroom. Ginny was sitting in front of the closet, watching the door intently. Molly stared at her. "Is Hermione in there?" Ginny nodded, not taking her eyes off the door, like it was the oddest thing she had ever seen. "Could you please leave for a few minutes, Ginny? I want to talk to Hermione."

Ginny nodded, the same look on her face, and stood. She walked out of the room, and Molly walked up to the closet door. Not sure what to do, she knocked. When no sound came from the other side, she opened the door. Hermione was hiding behind some of Ginny's things, and she was very good at it, which just made Molly feel even sadder. As she knelt down in the closet, Hermione flinched.

"What's wrong, Hermione?"

Hermione said nothing. She trembled and flinched again, but not even a whimper came out of her mouth.

"You can talk to me, Hermione. I won't get angry. It bothers me that you won't tell me what's bothering you. If you don't tell me, I can't fix it." She said. Hermione flinched again. "Maybe it's for the best that you heard our conversation. We really want to know what's going on with you Hermione, and unless you tell us, we can't help you. You were brought here so that you could be loved."

She sniffed. "I was loved at my home." She muttered, then turned ghost white and held out her arm. It was very bruised, and scarred, from what it looked like. Molly noticed she was wincing, and realized soon it was the arm she had broken the elbow of.

"Hermione, what are you doing?" Molly asked. "Why—why are you holding out your arm like that? Your elbow must hurt a lot."

She looked up at Molly, then closed her eyes softly. Hanging her head, she pushed her arm further. Molly, softly, put it back down by her side.

"I'm sorry, Hermione, I don't know what you expect me to do." She said. Hermione snapped her head up, winced again, and opened her eyes. She signed pain. Molly felt the concern flooding into her features. Hermione blinked, confused. "You—you want me to—?" She shook her head. "You didn't do anything wrong, Hermione."

Hermione nodded vigorously, wincing a lot. Molly sighed. "Hermione, you don't have to hurt yourself, and I am certainly not going to hurt

you. At least not on purpose. I don't want you to be hurt. I don't want you to be silent. Hermione, you won't get in trouble for voicing your opinion. Please, talk to me. Tell me what's wrong."

"You—you're supposed to punish me if I speak. Or if I look at you for too long." She said. "It's disrespectful."

"No, it's not. It's natural. Speaking is often necessary. And looking at someone—there's absolutely nothing wrong with that." Molly said. "Pain should not be a punishment. I will never hurt you because you've done something bad. And you really shouldn't hurt yourself either. Are you in pain?"

Hermione backed up and shook her head. "It's okay if you are, you know." Molly said. Almost instantaneously, Hermione burst into tears. "It's okay, Hermione. It'll all be okay."

"Do I have to go back?"

"Not if you don't want to."

"But—but that man said that they were going to see if they were wrong and my parents were nice to me. They weren't. They were mean to me. They won't send me back, will they?"

"No, Hermione, they aren't going to send you back."

"But it's going to be a custody trial. I've read about them in books. They decide whether the mummy and daddy get to keep their son or daughter or if someone else gets to adopt them. That's what's going to happen, isn't it? They're going to see if I have to go back to my mummy and daddy or if I should stay here or go somewhere safe?"

"Yes, Hermione, that's what is going to happen, but there are ways we can make sure everyone knows what happens when you're with your parents. All you have to do is tell the judge what your parents do to you, and they'll realize it's not safe for you to be there." Molly hoped.

“No, they won’t. What if they think that I should stay with them, because they are my parents, and they love me?”

“I don’t mean to sound mean, but, Hermione, are you sure they love you?”

“That’s what I’m trying to say. They don’t love me. They—” She stopped. “I—I’m really telling you all this. And—nothing...” Her voice trailed off. When it came back, it was stronger, and louder. “Nothing is happening! You’re not angry, are you?”

“No, I’m not.”

“And you haven’t punished me for listening to you and that man talking.”

“Well, it was about you, and it was something we were going to need to tell you eventually. It’s better you found out sooner.”

Her voice got quiet again. “You—you’re upset, though. Because I wouldn’t talk before. Because I wouldn’t tell you what was wrong. I kept silent. And then when I did talk, I said bad things. I’m sorry, Mrs. Weasley.”

“What are you sorry for? You didn’t know better than to keep silent. Before this conversation, you thought that you would get hurt if you spoke because it happened at your home. It’s understandable. And sometimes it’s natural to say bad things. Sometimes you just need to get it all out, even if you know you’re not supposed to. It’s not good to keep things bottled in. If you ever feel like you want to talk about anything, just tell me, and I’ll listen.”

More tears streamed down Hermione’s face. “At my old home I told my pillow everything.” She said.

Molly blinked. “Your old home?”

“I don’t want it to be my home anymore. This is a home. Where I was before wasn’t. I don’t know what to call it, but it wasn’t a home.” She sniffed. Molly hugged her, careful not to hurt her.

“Do you want this to be your home?”

“Yes. A lot.”

A/N: The custody trial will take place next chapter, though I suppose you know what will happen.

Harry walked into Ginny's room that night before their bed time. Hermione, who was sitting on the bed, looking at the sheets and blanket, looked over at him as he stepped over the threshold. She, they had all discovered, had very keen senses of hearing, sight, and smell. As he stepped in, she turned to face him, and he climbed on the bed next to her.

"I wanted to give you something." He said, smiling. Hermione blinked, astonished that he wanted to talk to her at all, let alone give her something. She was a freak at her school.

"What?" She asked. He held out an incredibly thin teddy bear that looked like it had seen its share of monster-filled nights.

"This is Rabbit. It's Percy's old teddy bear, but Molly gave it to me my first night here to fight off the monsters. Since Percy has Charlie to protect him now, he doesn't need it. And if Ron isn't old or strong enough to fight off the monsters himself, Ginny definitely won't be. So you can have Rabbit."

"Won't you need it?" She asked as he gave it to her. But he shook his head.

"I've got my own teddy bear now. And soon you will too. But until then, you should have Rabbit." He said, pushing Rabbit closer to her. She took it out of his hands and looked at it.

"Thank you, Harry." She said. Then the corners of her mouth twitched. "Why is it called 'Rabbit' if it's a bear?"

"Percy named it, not me." Harry smiled. "I hope you can get to sleep all right. Just remember that it's okay to be happy here."

"Right." Hermione said. She knew he was right, but had a little trouble believing it. Happiness. It had always been more of a...theory to her. An idea, rather than a feeling. Even when she was reading a happy book, she couldn't help but be reminded that eventually, it would end, and she would go back to her life. She always thought about her life as a book. And that thought stayed with her when she went to the

Burrow. Being taken away from her old home was just the prologue to the sequel she was about to write.

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Ginny was awake promptly at six just to find Hermione, in the same position that she was when Ginny had gone to sleep, reading. She sat up and beamed, throwing the blankets off her and crossing her legs, already overly energetic at six in the morning, not to mention that she had just woken up five seconds before.

“Did you go to sleep last night, Hermione?”

“Yes, of course I did. I went to sleep when Ron and Harry did, and I woke up around an hour ago.” Hermione said quietly, looking up from her book, doing a slight double take before deciding to look completely at Ginny. Ginny seemed not to notice that, but only grinned wider at Hermione’s words.

“Cool. No one wakes up as early as I do in this house. Harry started sleeping in as soon as he found out he was allowed to.” She said. Hermione laughed, the smallest of smiles appearing on her face for only a fraction of a moment.

“My parents encouraged sleeping. It kept me out of their way.” She said quietly. Ginny leaned forward and spoke in a soft voice.

“Did you elbow get sick like Harry’s hand got sick?” She asked in a worried voice, her smile fading to a regular size.

Hermione remembered that Harry’s hand had been covered in bandages and nodded. Ginny’s eyes widened.

“Were—” She lowered her voice even more, but in the stillness of the house, Hermione could hear. “Were your parents bad people like Harry’s aunt and uncle were?”

Harry had told Hermione a bit about his aunt and uncle, and in turn, Hermione told him about her parents. She nodded once more. “Yes.”



Ginny blinked. She was not smiling anymore. Not even the faintest. "Did your parents make your elbow sick?"

Hermione stared at the five year old. She had an amazing curiosity and was able to piece together the puzzle. Hermione was sure that her parents tried to keep her a bit in the dark about them because of Ginny's age. Yet she was still able to come to the conclusion that it was Hermione's parents' fault her elbow was broken. Well, "sick". No matter how well she could put the puzzle together, she still didn't exactly know the difference between 'sick' and 'hurt.' "Yes. They did make my elbow sick."

"And your head?" Ginny asked, her face falling slightly.

Hermione nodded, knowing more questions were on the way and bracing herself for them.

"Um...this will sound weird...but do you know why?"

"No." Hermione said so faintly it sounded like a breath. "But I wish I did." Tears glittered in her eyes as she looked back down at the book.

Ginny smiled again. "You don't know, do you? You don't know about—" Her mouth opened widely.

"Don't know about what?" Hermione asked, her pupils straying to the top of her eyes, but her head not moving.

"You don't know you're a witch, do you? That you're magic?"

"I—I'm what?" Hermione said, her head snapping up and her book falling into her lap and closing.

"You can do magic. Just like my mummy and daddy and my brothers. And like Harry. You're a witch. And when you're eleven, you're going to go to Hogwarts and learn how to control your magic and do spells." She said. Hermione stared at her, incredulous. Witches, wizards; stories about them had always been in the fantasy section in libraries. Never the nonfiction section. People who believed in that sort of thing were supposed to be crazy.

“What are you talking about?” She stuttered. “M-magic? Me? No. No, I’m not magic. I’m just...I’m too normal.”

“Oh yeah? Then why would they take you here instead of anywhere else? Why would they take you to a place where ten witches and wizards already lived? Why wouldn’t they take you to a smaller place, or a Muggle place?” She asked. Hermione blinked.

“What’s a Muggle?” She asked in a small voice, hoping it would get to a different subject.

“People who can’t do magic.”

“Yes. Yes!” Hermione exclaimed, talking a but louder but not loud enough to disturb anyone. “I’m one of those. I’m a Muggle. I’m not magic. They just brought me here because I was like Harry.”

Ginny nodded, smiling. “You are like Harry. You’re magic and were growing up in a Muggle house, where people were bad to you and made you sick. Just like Harry was. But now he’s here, and he’s happy. Before he was sad, just like you’re sad now. Soon, you’ll be happy too.”

Hermione sighed. “I dunno about that. There’s going to be a trial to see if I can go back to my parents.”

Ginny looked concerned, her smile fading again. “But they were mean to you. And they made you not talk to people who were older. They scared you. Why would they want to give you to people who scared you?”

“Well, Ginny, a lot of people will believe that because they are my birth parents, that I should stay with them, because they...they love me. But it’s because they don’t know what my parents do to me, and they don’t know that my parents obviously do not love me. So they might just want to keep me with my family.”

“But—if they don’t love you, how can they be your family? Families are supposed to love each other. Do you love them?”

Hermione looked at the ground, silent for a long while. She looked over at Rabbit. Harry had given it to her to protect her from scary things. Because he cared about her. She never had a teddy bear with her parents. They wouldn't allow her. She sighed. "Sometimes I think I do. But I'm not positive I do."

"And you said they obviously don't love you. If there's no love in your house, how can you call them your family? How can you call that place your home?"

"You seem rather informed for a five year old. And very observant." Hermione said. Ginny blinked.

"I've got six brothers. What else can I do?" She shrugged.

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Two whole weeks later the Weasleys, Harry, and Hermione were getting ready for the custody trial. Hermione was very nervous. She held Newt, her first real teddy bear, close to her chest and took deep, shaking breaths to try to calm herself. Harry was by her side, smiling at her, and Ginny kept skipping around. Ron, whom had become rather fond of having Hermione around, kept close by her, though said nothing and did nothing. Bill walked up to them.

"Are you going to be okay, Hermione?" He asked. Arthur was going to take them to the King's Cross station before he went to the trial. Hermione nodded. "I really hope you get to stay with us. Either way, send me a letter at Hogwarts, okay? I want to know how you're doing." He said, giving her a quick hug. She nodded again as Charlie came by.

"Good luck, Hermione. Just tell the complete truth and everything should go smoothly. I'm gonna miss you, but I'll see you at Christmas." He said, confidently. "Promise."

She nodded, thanked him, and watched as Percy stopped, looked at her for a second, sighed, and walked away. Over the last two weeks, she had become least acquainted with Percy, but they still were

somewhat friends. It didn't bother her though. Percy often did not like to face his problems. Arthur brought them out of the Burrow.

"Are you okay so far, Hermione?" Molly asked. Hermione nodded, but a tear ran down her face. They Flooed to the courthouse, and Hermione did not even have the time to be amazed by the means of transportation. She was too scared.

Her parents were not yet at the courthouse, though the judge was ready. She asked to first speak to Hermione. Clutching Newt tightly, she walked in to the room.

"Why are you holding that teddy bear so tight?" The judge asked, pointing to the bear as she sat down behind the desk, motioning for Hermione to take the seat in front.

"You're going to send me back to my parents, aren't you?" She said, tears running quickly down her face. The judge looked at her sincerely.

"You don't want to go to your parents?" Hermione shook her head. "Why not? What happens that you don't like when you're with your parents?"

Hermione tried to calm down for a second before answering, and then, she sighed. "They—" She burst into tears again. "No, please, don't make me say it, I'll get in trouble."

"Anything you say in this room will only reach my ears. These walls are magically soundproof, and I can be sworn to confidence if it is what you wish. Do—do you know you're a witch?"

"Ginny told me. And when I asked Mr. and Mrs. Weasley, they said I was probably a witch. But my parents don't know that, do they?"

"No, Hermione, they don't." The judge said. "Now, do you think you're ready to answer my first question? Or do you need more time?"

She sniffed. "I think I'm ready. It's just...my parents...I don't think they love me. At least not like they should. Whenever I talk around them, I

get hurt. And even when I'm not doing anything, I get hurt. The only time I don't get hurt is when I'm not around them. I know that technically they are, but I don't think of them as my family. Especially since Ginny brought it to my attention that a house without love isn't a family. It's not even a home."

The judge blinked. "How old is Ginny?"

"She just turned six a week or two ago." Hermione sniffed, hugging Newt tighter to her. "She's really nice, and really smart. And she's the first friend I ever had. She's more than that. She's like my little sister."

"Do you like being with the Weasleys?"

"Yes, I do." She nodded. Then she looked up at the judge. "Will...will you know if I have to go to my parents or if I can stay with the Weasleys by September 19th?"

The judge smiled. "That's your eighth birthday." Hermione nodded.

"All the birthdays I spent with my parents, nothing happened. They just told me I could add a number to my age. But all the kids in school were really excited for their birthdays and I never understood why. But then when Ginny had her birthday, and then when Percy did, the Weasleys had a big party. They both got new things that they didn't know about before, I think they were called presents. Well, my parents never gave me presents. I've never heard of them before. So I told the Weasleys that and they said they would get me a lot of presents and make sure I was really happy on my birthday, like I was supposed to be." She hung her head. "I wanted to know what it's like to feel happy and to know people care about you like that. Maybe I was being selfish. I'm sorry."

"There's nothing to be sorry for Hermione. In fact, you've been very helpful. Thank you very much for talking to me and answering my questions, because I know some of them may make you uncomfortable. But you can go back outside for a few minutes, I want to talk to some other people."

Hermione's head snapped up, her grip around Newt tightening so that his chest was puffed out with stuffing. "Are...are you going to talk to my parents? No, please, you can't."

"I have to get their side of the story, Hermione."

"No, please, ma'am. They can't know I told you anything. They can't even know I talked to you. I'll get hurt."

The judge smiled at her reassuringly. "I'll make sure they can't hurt you, Hermione."

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Hermione saw her parents outside in the courtroom and hung her head immediately, looking at the floor. She walked far away from them and hid behind Arthur, whom had come back. The Grangers stood.

"I assume you want to talk to us?" Mr. Granger said. The judge shook her head.

"No, not yet. I would actually like to talk to Ginny, if she's here."

Ginny, who was playing with Fred and George in the pews, looked over. She looked back at the twins and shrugged, skipping over to the judge's office. The judge closed the door, and Ginny hopped onto the chair in front of the desk, smiling. The judge sat behind the desk.

"Hello Ginny."

"Hi. What's your name?" Ginny asked, kneeling on the chair to get a better look over the top of the desk. But then she remembered how her family got annoyed by all her questions and didn't want the judge annoyed by her, so she promised not to ask as many questions.

"My name is Judge Whitley. But you can call me Michelle if you want. I don't mind."

"That's okay." Ginny smiled. Then she made a face, tilting her head. "Why do you want to talk to me?" That didn't count.

"Well, Hermione told me a lot about you. I figured you two must talk a lot. And I wanted to know something. Now, before I ask you, I would like to tell you that nothing in this room will come out if you don't want it to."

"I don't."

"All right. Well, I wanted to ask you whether you knew what Hermione's parents were like."

Ginny stared at Judge Whitley. "I—I don't want this to leave. I definitely don't. But..." She leaned forward and spoke quietly. "They are bad people. I can tell even without Hermione telling me. Harry's aunt and uncle were bad people, and they were mean to his hand and made it sick. Hermione's elbow looked like Harry's hand did, with a lot of bandages on it. She told me that her parents were mean to her elbow, and her head too. Her face and arms were brown, and not because it was her skin color. I think they were bruises." She sat back. Judge Whitley's eyes widened.

"How sick were Hermione's elbow and head?"

"Very sick. Not even Mummy's kisses could heal them." Ginny said. "And they heal everything. Harry's hand is still sick. And Hermione's elbow is too. Her arm is still in the sling thingy. And sometimes she won't talk in front of people older than her."

"What did you think about Hermione when you first met her?"

"I knew she was different. But I liked it. I knew it would be fun to try to help her. Then I realized how different she was. She read more than Percy. And she never spoke in front of anyone but me, Ron, and Harry. She was always scared by the smallest things. And was always worried about getting in trouble."

"What do your parents do when you do something bad?"

"It depends on what I do. Sometimes they'll take me into a different room and talk to me and tell me that I what I did was wrong and I shouldn't do it again. Other times they'll tell me the same thing, but louder and angrier, and then they'll make me eat dinner in my bedroom, and they won't let me jump on the bed and I have to go to sleep straight after I eat."

"That's it?"

"Sometimes if they get really angry, they'll make me stay in my room for a few days, but they always let me out to use the bathroom and eat meals. And after a while, they'll come in and make sure I learned my lesson. Then I know that everything is okay, and they aren't mad anymore, because they smile and hug me and tell me they love me."

"Do they get mad a lot?"

"No. They say that they try to be understanding because we're little and don't know better. But if I do something to get in trouble, and then I do it again, after they've talked to me, that's the only time I will be in my room for more than one night."

"That doesn't sound too bad."

Ginny shrugged. "The only thing bad about it is that I always feel sad I upset my parents. They're always really nice to me, so when I get them angry, I don't like it."

"Well, that's very kind of you."

Ginny smiled triumphantly and Judge Whitley smiled faintly. "If you want to go back to your family, I need to talk to some other people."

She nodded, but then stopped. "Judge Whitley? Are—you're not going to take Hermione away from us, are you?" That definitely didn't count.

"Ginny, I can't answer that question right now. I have to be fair and talk to as many people as I can. But you've been very helpful, and you've helped me make my decision. Thank you very much, Ginny."



Ginny clambered off the chair and smiled. "Thank you, Judge Whitley."

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"I'd like to speak to Ron, if I may." Judge Whitley said. Ron walked tentatively to the judge's office, looking behind him at Hermione.

He sat down in front of the judge's desk as she sat down behind it. She smiled at him and sighed,

"You're good friends with Hermione, right?" She asked. Ron nodded. "So she tells you a lot then?" He nodded again. "How much has she told you about her parents?"

"A lot." Ron said. "She told me that they hit her."

"Do you believe her?"

"She's too serious about it to be lying. For a long time after she came to our house, she wouldn't talk. All she would do is read. And later I found out it was because her parents wouldn't let her talk. They were mean to her and told her to do things that my mum and dad say seven year olds shouldn't have to do."

"Like what?" Judge Whitley asked.

"Like she tries to clean up after herself all the time, and other people too. She didn't think she was allowed to play with toys, and was always scared to get in trouble."

"What else was she afraid of?" Judge Whitley asked, remembering how Ginny told her Hermione had been afraid of everything.

"A lot of things, She was afraid of talking, of getting hurt, of anyone older than her... I don't know if I can list them all." Ron said. Judge Whitley nodded.

"That's okay, Ron. Thank you. You have been very helpful. Can you please call Harry in for me?"

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"You wanted to see me?" Harry said, walking into the office. Judge Whitley nodded.

"Is your hand okay?" She asked, noticing the bandages on his hand and wondering if she would have asked that question had Ginny not brought it up.

He made a face. "Let's stick to talking about Hermione, if we can."

"That's perfectly understandable, Harry. I wanted to ask you how much she tells you about what went on in her parents' house."

He looked at her, a bit imploringly. "If I tell you really important things, no one has to know I told you, do they? I mean, you can keep that I said it secret?"

"If you wish."

"Well, I do. And Hermione tells me everything. She doesn't usually like to talk about it, but if I tell her about my aunt and uncle, she'll tell me anything. Well, about her parents"

"What kind of things does she tell you?" Judge Whitley asked. Harry looked around tentatively. "Nothing leaves this room, Harry. Nothing."

"They hit her. And they won't let her talk. And they take her toys away. Her bed is just a mattress at her parents' home, because everything else has blood, and her mum won't get her new things or wash the blood out. She said they drink this funny smelling stuff. The labels are ripped off and they won't tell her what it is, so she doesn't know. They won't let her eat until everyone else at the table has started. And she has to clean up afterward. She said her parents only hugged her when they were going to hurt her back or head and wanted to hide it."

“Really?” Judge Whitley said, letting out a long sigh. “Thank you Harry. You’ve been a great help.”

“When will we know if Hermione is going to stay or leave?” He asked. Judge Whitley smiled at him.

“I have to be fair and talk to Hermione's parents, Arthur, and Molly before coming to any conclusions. After that, you'll know.”

“Thank you, ma’am.”

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“Preposterous.” Mr. Granger said. “You’re going to believe a six year old over us?”

“Six year olds often have a clearer, less distorted view of the world than adults. She seemed to know what she was talking about. And your daughter had a few things to say herself.”

“I don’t care what Hermione said.” Mrs. Granger said, incredibly believable looking tears falling down her face. “I love her, more than anything, more than my life. Sometimes we have to punish her to prove we love her.”

“Punish her for speaking?”

“We do not punish her for speaking!” Mr. Granger barked. “She is free to speak her mind in our home, and she knows that!”

“Obviously not. I’m sorry, Mr. and Mrs. Granger, but I’ve gotten information from your daughter herself, plus Ginny, Harry, Ron and Mr. and Mrs. Weasley, all of which Hermione has confided in. In this situation, we must believe the child, especially since the story has remained the same coming through the mouths of all the sources. I’m very sorry, but I do not believe your house is a safe place for Hermione to be raised. She is not receiving the love she needs, love that I know she will get in the Weasley home. I am giving custody to the foster family.”

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“What does that mean?” Ron asked, tugging on his mother’s sleeve after the judge told them her decision.

“It means that Hermione is going to stay.” Judge Whitley said, smiling at Ron. He beamed. She walked over to Hermione. “Do you want to say goodbye to your parents?”

She thought for a long time. “Yes. Er...Judge Whitley? I was wondering...if I could do it in your office.”

The judge smiled. “Of course. They’re in there right now.”

Molly sighed. “Be careful, Hermione.”

“Yes, Molly.”

Disclaimer! I do not own any of these characters, no matter how much I wish I did.

A/N Here we go...I practically cried writing this chapter, my eyes were burning from either tears or hours of staring at a bright computer screen in a pitch black room...Please to enjoy...

Hermione walked into the judge's office and walked quickly to the opposite corner her parents were sitting in. She looked at the floor, her hands behind her back. All she felt was fear, regret that she had said yes, and her parent's eyes on her neck. She sighed and let a brave thought enter her mind. Slowly, she raised her head.

"Will you let me say goodbye?"

"Hell no." Mr. Granger said. He walked over to where his daughter was and kicked her in the stomach, and she fell to the ground, hitting her already aching head on the wall. "What in god's name did you tell that judge?"

"The truth."

He kicked her again. "I wasn't asking for an answer." Mrs. Granger walked over, a shadowy glare on her face. Mr. Granger bent down and took Newt from Hermione's hands. "Teddy bear? No freak like you deserves anything." He ripped Newt's head off and tore its body in half. Hermione's lip twitched, and she shut her eyes.

"We're glad we lost. In our eyes, we won. Now we won't have to deal with you. You are a big pain, Hermione. And now our pain is relieved." She stepped on her broken elbow with her heel. Hermione let out a cry in pain, and that just made the pressure increase. "Seven years and you haven't learned to deal with a little pain. You're so weak. My only regret is that we never got through to you."

Mr. Granger added what he must have thought would increase the impact of her speech, by kicking her head into the wall.

"You're a freak. You never will be normal. And nor will those Weasley people. Be glad you get to spend your time with freaks like yourself."

Because we don't want you. And soon enough, neither will they." She said, removing her heel from Hermione's head. Just as she was about to kick her, the door popped open, and Molly and Arthur were standing there, wands drawn. Molly ran over to Hermione and lifted her up, taking her away from where her parents were.

"What are you doing here?" Mr. Granger asked, innocent sounding. "We were just trying to say goodbye."

"No. We heard you. That's definitely not what we heard."

"How did you hear us?"

"The judge took the soundproofing off." Arthur said. "We couldn't see what was happening, but we kinda figured."

Molly hugged Hermione. "We would have come in sooner, but the judge wouldn't let us yet. I'm sorry, Hermione."

"My head hurts."

"I bet it does. Come on, let's go home." Molly said. But Hermione shook her head and pointed to the shredded remains of Newt. Arthur Summoned them and assured her he'd fix it as soon as they got back. He gave her a kiss on the forehead.

"Let's go home." She said.

XxXxX

Dear Bill,

The judge gave custody to your parents, so I don't have to go back to my parents. We went to see a doctor today, and it looks like I might still be in the sling for a while. Thank you for your support, and tell Charlie he was able to keep his promise. Oh, and tell Percy hi.

Love,

Hermione

She looked for a long time at that one word. Love. The kids in her school used to always use the term so loosely. I love this. I love that. I'd love to go. But Hermione never really used the term. She often did not think she knew what love was. It was a concept never practiced by her parents. The Grangers never told each other that they loved each other. But the Weasleys did. They used it even more loosely than the kids in her school used to. And with feeling. They really did love each other.

"Love Hermione." She whispered to herself. She smiled and sent the letter.

Ginny skipped into the room, holding Newt. "Here you go Hermione. Daddy fixed it for you."

She smiled and accepted the bear. "Thanks, Ginny." She sighed. "Does it always feel so empty during the school year?"

"Wait two years when Fred and George leave. It'll be quiet. And then when you, Ron, and Harry all leave, I'll be the only one left." She said, not sounding very happy about it, but still grinning widely.

"You don't sound very excited for that day."

"Well, all of you will be gone. And Bill's already talking about getting a job in a different country, Charlie will probably get accepted onto some Quidditch team, and then I'll be alone. It won't be as fun." She shrugged. "Oh well. That's still a long time away."

"Yeah. A long time." She said. "Four years. Wow. D'you realize that when I graduate Hogwarts, more of my life will be spent here than with my parents?"

"That'll happen when you're..." She counted on her fingers. "Fifteen. You'll have spent eight years here, but seven years with your parents."

"No. When I'm sixteen. I spent practically eight years with my parents."

"It's hard to think of you at Charlie's age." She said, standing on her bed and beginning to jump up and down. "I mean, it's easy to think of Ron at that age, because I imagine him just like Charlie, except maybe a little dumber. And Fred and George will probably be exactly the same as they are now. And Percy will just be his same boring self. But you seem like someone who would go through a lot of phases. I dunno, you just don't seem like you'll be the same in eight years as you are now. For one thing I hope you'll smile more."

Hermione smiled, having a distinct feeling that she would like living with the Weasleys.

XxXxX

"Nine." Molly sighed. "Nine children in this house."

"And to think we're getting paid for two of them."

"That'll only last a year, until Bill leaves and then we only have ten."

"Think of it this way, Molly. By next year, Bill will be gone, and Percy and Charlie will be at Hogwarts. The year after that, Fred, George, Percy, and Charlie will be at Hogwarts, and Bill will be gone. Considering that he takes whatever job he was supposedly offered. Then, we'll be left with only four."

"Arthur, it's much too early to be saying when the children will be gone." She said. "I don't want them to leave."

"We are not exactly financially secure to be caring for nine children. I have no idea why the Ministry is even allowing us to do this."

"Because they're insane, that's what I was assuming." She said. Arthur looked into the boxes she had spread on the kitchen table.

"What are you looking for?"

"Old school pictures. I swear I had some pictures of Harry's parents."



He helped search. Picking up a box, he started going through it. "Molly? Who's this?"

She looked. "That's...Remus...Lupin, I think. He used to be friends with James and Sirius. Don't you remember? Severus was always on his case about something."

"Oh yeah. Thought he was a werewolf or something, wasn't it?"

"Yeah, I think that was it." She chuckled. "And he was right, wasn't he?"

"Right on the nose."

Molly stopped and took the picture from him. Lily, James, and Sirius were also there. Sirius was sneaking up on Remus, who was sitting in a chair reading, and Lily was sitting on James's lap. Molly smiled.

"It's a shame Harry can't get to know Sirius." She sighed. "Though I don't know how comfortable I would be with that, seeing what he did."

"Look, Molly, his best friends had just been killed. He was driven by insanity."

"He was the Secret-Keeper! Minerva told me the whole story. He ratted the location to You-Know-Who."

Arthur sighed. "Maybe Harry would like to meet Remus."

"It will be near impossible to reach him. He's become a hermit since James and Lily died, from what I heard."

Arthur shrugged. "It's how it feels to lose your four best friends in twenty-four hours. But I bet seeing Harry again would cheer him up."

"Harry's hand is still wrapped in bandages and he still looks obviously malnourished. Don't you think it would upset Remus if he saw his dead best friends' son like this?"

"If you want, we can wait. But I think it would be good if we gave Harry some connections to his parents."

XxXxX

"Still reading, Hermione?" George said, sliding on her bed. Fred straddled Ginny's tiny desk chair and scoffed.

"Since when has passion changed with surroundings, George?" He asked. Tilting the book slightly, he was able to read the title. "David Copperfield? What's that?"

"It's a very good book." Hermione said softly. "In many ways I feel I can relate."

"Really?"

(A/N This next few paragraphs contain spoilers to DavidCopperfield, in case you care)"Yes. David's widowed mother marries a man he does not like, who is very mean to him, and sends him away to boarding school."

"Why?"

"Because David fell behind in his studies and while receiving his beating for it bit his stepfather." Hermione's lip twitched, maybe in fear. "But he had to return home because his mother died, and his stepfather sends him to work at a factory in London. Feeling like no one is left that cares about him, he runs away and goes to live with his aunt. His aunt keeps him, even though his stepfather came back to fight for custody of him." She smiled faintly.

"Yeah. I see how you can relate. Did his aunt have seven children?"

She shook her head, smiling still. George cheered.

"Fred, we've broken the record. She has smiled for twenty-six seconds. We can now proudly say that we have gotten Hermione to smile longer than anyone in this house."

She stopped smiling and they both booed. "Hilarious you two."

"We thought so." They chimed and walked out of the room.

Ginny walked past them, and George ruffled her hair. "What's up, kid?"

She looked up at them and blinked. "You."

Hermione laughed, and the twins looked disappointed before they walked out of the room. Ginny walked into the bedroom. "What's wrong with them?"

"They thought they held the record time for making me smile, but you made me laugh." She smiled, finding it odd that Ginny was not.

"That's a big book."

"Yes. It's not too hard." She frowned. "I haven't seen you smiling as much lately."

Ginny shrugged.

"Are you sad?" Hermione asked. Ginny shrugged again. "What's wrong?"

Looking at the ground, Ginny asked in a low voice, "Does your head hurt?"

Hermione's face slowly sank. "Not very much." She lied.

"Don't lie, Hermione, your head hurts, doesn't it? Your parents made it sick yesterday. I heard Fred and George talking about it." She said in a louder voice than before. "They told me that your mummy and daddy were mean to you again when the judge wasn't looking. Is it true?"

Slowly, Hermione nodded. "Yes. They hurt me very badly."

Ginny sighed. "Did they always hurt you that badly?" Hermione nodded. "If they did, why did we start caring now? Why wasn't anything done before?"

"Because nobody knew before."

"Why didn't they know before? We could have done something. You could have lived here for longer."

"No one knew because I didn't tell anyone."

"Why not? Why didn't you tell anyone if you were getting hurt so badly?"

"Ginny, I was afraid to speak, let alone tell someone what was happening!" Hermione yelled. "I couldn't bear to think what would have happened if I told anyone what my parents did to me!"

Tears were running down her face, and soon, Ginny started to cry too. "I'm sorry, Hermione."

"About what?" Hermione mumbled.

"I don't want us to fight. People fought at your old home. It's not like that here. I don't want us to fight and be like your old home."

Hermione blinked, leaning back against the wall. "I don't want us to fight either."

"So we won the trial right?" Hermione nodded. Ginny smiled. "So you're my sister now?"

"Yeah, I am."

"I've always wanted a sister. Everyone in this family is just brothers. But now I have a sister."

Hermione nodded. "I've always wanted a sister too. But I was always afraid she wouldn't like me."

"I like you." Ginny said in a distant voice, like she was surprised that anyone could not like Hermione, and wondering why she had assumed that no one would.

She smiled. "I like you too."

"Then it's a good thing we're sisters."

XxXxX

"I'd like to propose a toast." George said. "To winning!"

"How about...to a new sister, and of course, the eighth Weasley brother, who is actually a Potter, but you get the point?" Fred recommended. Ron laughed, and Hermione and Harry smiled faintly.

"Perfect, mate." George said. "To a brother and a sister."

"A brother and a sister." Everyone repeated, holding up their cups.

A/N I know that no seven-year-old could comprehend Charles Dickens but I read David Copperfield this weekend and liked it a lot. Then I started writing this chapter and realized that it was similar. Anyways, I hoped you enjoyed the chapter, and next chapter, we will have Hermione's birthday to look forward to.

Disclaimer! I do not own these characters. These characters are the complete works of J.K. Rowling.

A/N I realized writing this chapter how much I love writing all the Weasleys at younger ages. But it does get me wondering how I'm supposed to turn Ginny into a sarcastic, cynical person...so much like me...Anyway, this will be a short chapter due to want to stress a point. Bon appétit!

Fred, George, and Ron took turns catching apples thrown by Harry and Hermione. They had tried to play two-a-side Quidditch, but Hermione and Harry didn't know how, and they never let Ginny play. So they zoomed around and caught apples that were thrown to them, while Ginny ran around the field and collected the apples that were dropped. She seemed to be having a grand time, laughing and spinning. Fred looked down at Harry and Hermione.

"Either of you want to take a shot?" He asked, landing on the ground next to them and offering his broom. Harry blinked.

"I'll try." He said, taking the broom from Fred, who began showing him how to mount it, but Harry was already in the air by the time Fred's mouth opened. George and Ron watched in awe, suspended in the air, as Harry zoomed around them, laughing.

"This is fun!" He called. "C'mon, Ginny, throw one!"

Ginny reached into the bucket of apples, picked up a large, round green apple, and threw it high into the air. It went off course, way off course, and Harry flew off to the right to catch it. Fred laughed.

"Nice throw, Ginny." He mumbled. She ran off, following Harry on the broom as the apple flew off to the other side of the field. Harry dived down and caught the apple feet from the ground, steering himself away from a crash just in time. Everyone stared at him as he landed next to Fred, gave him his broomstick back, and dropped the apple in the bucket.

"You're better than Charlie!" George gaped. Harry blinked again.

“What does that mean?”

“It means you’re a great Quidditch player!” Ginny piped, coming back to them and not sounding at all out of breath. “Where’d you learn to play?”

“By watching you three.” Harry said, pointing to the twins and Ron.

“You’ve only been watching us twenty minutes. There’s no way you could be that good from watching in twenty minutes.”

Hermione looked at her watch. “Molly will get angry if we’re in too late. She wanted us to be back by six.”

Fred looked at George and sighed. “It’s no fun having a responsible one around.”

Fred, George, and Ron each grabbed their brooms and walked down. Ginny grabbed the bucket and followed them. Harry took it from her, but she took it back.

“Your hand is still sick.” She said, pointing to his bandaged hand. Skipping, she carried the bucket of apples all the way back to the house.

“She’s too hyper.” Harry said to Hermione, who laughed.

“Try sharing a bedroom with her. If she’s awake and I’m not, that won’t stay true for long.” Hermione said. Out of habit, she flexed the fingers on her broken arm and felt a lot less pain than she would have a week ago. “It’s hard to believe I’ve only been here a three and a half weeks.”

“It’s great being here, isn’t it?” Harry grinned as they reached the house. Hermione nodded.

“Hello, Molly.” They both chimed. Fred, George, and Ron came in after them, mumbling, “Hi, Mum.”

Ginny came in, carrying the bucket filled with apples. Molly grunted.

“Boys, why do you always make your sister carry that bucket?” She asked, taking it from Ginny.

“We carry the brooms.” George said defensively.

“She’s just a little girl!”

“Exactly.” Fred said, walking over to Ginny, picking her up, and displaying one of her scrawny arms. “Look at this girl. She needs to bulk up a little if you ask me.”

Ginny giggled, but Molly did not find it funny. “Mummy, what are you doing to the clock?” She asked.

They all looked on the table to see Molly’s famed clock dismantled. Molly shrugged.

“Isn’t it obvious? We have two new family members.” She said, looking at Harry and Hermione. “So we need two more hands, don’t we?”

She flicked her wand and the clock repaired itself. With another flick, it hung itself on the wall. Arthur’s hand pointed to ‘work’; Bill’s, Charlie’s, and Percy’s all pointed to ‘school’; Molly, Fred, George, Ron, and Ginny were all pointing to ‘home,’ like usual, except they were joined by two more hands: Harry and Hermione.

They all stared at the clock for a long time, Fred still holding Ginny, Molly still with her wand in hand. By the time they realized the time, Arthur’s hand had moved to ‘traveling.’

“Evening, all!” He exclaimed brightly, taking Ginny from Fred and kissing her.

“Look, Daddy.” She said, pointing to the clock.

“You’ve added hands for Harry and Hermione.” He said to his wife.



“No, look where their hands are pointing!” Ginny said. Arthur looked and read the writing next to the eight hands.

“Home.” He said quietly.

XxXxX

Hermione thought a long time that night about the clock. For three and a half weeks she knew that the Burrow had been home. It had been so known to her that she barely even thought about how much it meant to her.

But that clock proved a lot, more than just the location of everyone on it. It proved that Hermione was part of the family. Molly wanted to know where she was at all times. Like a good mother. And her hand was currently pointing to ‘home.’

She smiled to herself. Before that, home had always meant the same as house to her. But she realized when she saw the clock that she had been wrong. There was a big difference between a house and a home. In a house, people lived together and got along. In a house, you solved your problems. In a house, you relied on a heating system to keep you warm.

In a home, people lived together as a family and loved each other. In a home, you solved your problems with help from the other people in the home. In a home, you relied on each other to keep you warm.

And Hermione wasn’t in a house. She was in a home. Her home.

Disclaimer! I do not own these characters. However, during history class, I often drift into a land where I do, but usually around the time I'm swimming in money, Mr. Hall gives me detention for daydreaming.

A/N Wow. All I can say is just...wow. I looked at my stats this morning and practically passed out. I could not believe how many people are actually reading this story. Thank you so, so much. And here is the latest chapter of The Sir and Ma'am Chronicles.

Harry had only gotten better at Quidditch and soon discovered it was his passion. His hand, now completely free of infection, was repaired in an instant by Molly. Hermione's sling was no longer needed, however Healers weren't sure it was safe for her to take the cast off. Both were free of bruises, and both smiled as much as any Weasley child. They were as good as, too; the only things holding them back were their last names and lack of red hair and freckles.

It was now no more unusual for them to look at the clock and see hands for Harry and Hermione as it was to see one for Bill. And as September 19th approached, Hermione was getting anxious. Of course, she hid it quite well, for part of her was still in the Sir and Ma'am Chronicles (a clever name the Weasleys had made up for when Harry and Hermione had first come to their home) and she often hid her emotions to keep from injury.

Ginny woke Hermione up on her birthday the same way she woke up Ron: jumping on the bed and chanting her wake-up song. Hermione grumbled and turned over.

"Shh, Ginny, you'll wake the whole house up." Hermione said. Ginny grinned, still jumping.

"The whole house is already up. Don't you remember what day it is?"

"No."

"It's your birthday! You turn eight today! Come on, everyone is downstairs so you can open your presents!" Ginny said, pulling Hermione into a sitting position.

"I got presents?" Hermione said, rubbing her eyes. Ginny nodded.

"Come on, you've got loads of presents!" She said impatiently. Ginny, unlike most children her age, liked to watch people open presents just as much as she liked opening them herself. "Everyone's waiting! Get dressed!"

"I can if you stop jumping on my bed!" Hermione laughed, and Ginny fell onto the bed cross-legged, grinning.

"Get dressed and come downstairs, Mummy's made a big breakfast for you." She said, skipping out of the room and down the stairs. Hermione chuckled, dressed quickly, and walked downstairs after her.

When she reached the kitchen, she jumped slightly. The whole table was filled with presents. She blinked and walked up to the table.

"These—these are all for me?" She gaped, and everyone around the table nodded. "What are they?"

"That's the fun of it!" Ginny beamed. "You don't know what they are until you open them! And Mummy and Daddy won't tell me what they are, either."

"Well, Ginny, that's because you couldn't keep a secret if it was a life or death matter." George said. Ginny stuck her tongue out at him and knelt on the chair for a better look at Hermione. "Mum, where's Ginny's booster seat, she's shrunk again."

"George, that's not nice." Molly said.

"I know. But it's funny." He said, and Fred laughed.

"Aren't you going to open your presents, Hermione?" Arthur asked. Hermione blinked.

"Really?" She said, gaping once more and staring at all the gifts.

"Yes, of course really." Molly laughed. Hermione reached for a gift and ripped the wrapping off.

In a few minutes, Hermione had a pile of books and toys on the table. "You're really giving me all these?" She said, astonished.

"No, we gave them to you so we could taunt you with gifts that you'll never be able to read or play with." Fred joked, and they all laughed, except Hermione and Harry.

"That's what my parents did." Hermione said quietly, a trace of tears coming to her eyes. "If someone gave me a gift, my parents would let me open it, but then they would take it away. Sometimes they would burn them or sell them right in front of me. I was never good enough for any of them."

"The Dursleys would do the same." Harry whispered.

Molly sighed. She thought she was done with all that. She thought the Sir and Ma'am Chronicles were over. Apparently not.

"Harry, Hermione, that isn't true in this house. Hermione, you keep all these gifts. If you don't like one, that's your decision. Just tell us and we'll take it back and exchange it for something you do like. When someone gives you something, it's your decision to keep it or not. Not ours."

" 'Unless it's something really violent or inappropriate.' " Fred mimicked in his mother's voice.

"Yes." Arthur said cautiously. "Then we can take it away."

"But those usually don't tend to be gifts." Molly said.

George nodded. "They always are!"

"Yes." Fred said deviously. "Father Christmas gives them to us."

"Fred, dear, I think we would know if Father Christmas gave you fake blood." Molly said. She turned to Hermione, who was flipping through the pages of a paperback book they had given her. Ron was staring

at her, incredulous, for she was almost completely ignoring the toys that were piled in front of her.

An owl pecked on the window, and Ginny hopped off the chair and raced off to get it before Arthur could even take a step. She jumped to try and reach the lock on the window, but still was too short. As Arthur walked over to help her, she overturned the laundry basket, clambered on top of it, and unlocked the window. The owl flew in and took its perch on the table.

“Bill!” Ginny grinned as she took the letter from the owl and gave it to Hermione.

“It’s for me?”

Hermione,

Happy Birthday! It’s been really busy around her, so I apologize for not responding to your letter sooner. Charlie and I are very happy that you’re staying, and Percy would be too if he had listened to the letter. (Hermione laughed.) I hope you have a great birthday, and Charlie and I got something for you in Hogsmeade

Love,

Bill

Hermione took the package that was attached and unwrapped it. Large quantities of sweets lay under them, and Hermione grinned.

“Do I get these too?”

“Merlin’s beard.” Molly mumbled.

XxXxX

“Did you have a nice birthday?”

“The best I’ve ever had.”

“Not that there’s much to compete with, but I’m glad we could make it special.” Molly said, kissing Hermione’s forehead. “Goodnight, Hermione.”

“Goodnight Molly.” She said.

Arthur and Molly met in the hall. “Switch?” Arthur said, and Molly laughed, walking into Ron and Harry’s room.

“Goodnight, Ron, and please actually go to sleep tonight, I’m checking on you in half an hour and if you aren’t in bed, you won’t be having any sugar rushes for a long, long time.”

“Aw, come on, Mum!”

“I mean it.” She gave him a kiss on the forehead and walked over to Harry’s bed.

“Goodnight, Molly.” Harry said sadly as she kissed his forehead.

“Is something wrong Harry?”

Harry snuck a nervous glance over at Ron and shook his head, removing his glasses. “No. Just tired.”

“Okay.” Molly said disbelievingly. “Goodnight, boys.”

XxXxX

“Don’t you want to go play Quidditch with everyone else, Harry?” Molly asked him the next day when she was cleaning up Ron and Harry’s room and saw Harry sitting on his bed. “I thought you were out there with them?”

Harry shook his head, looking down at the bedspread. “I don’t want to play Quidditch right now.”

Molly sighed. “I know there’s something bothering you. Won’t you please tell me?”

She sat next to him on the bed. Harry sighed, still not looking up at her. "There is something bothering me. It's been bothering me for a long time, but Hermione's birthday just made me think of it again." He looked up at her finally. "What were my parents like?"

Molly's face sank slightly. "Oh."

"I know, I'm sorry, I shouldn't have asked, it's just—"

"No, Harry, you have every reason to ask." Molly said, putting an arm around his shoulders. "It's just that I don't know how much I could tell you about them. They were a bit younger than me, and I was friends with your mother, but after I left Hogwarts, we didn't have a much stronger relationship than sending Christmas cards every year."

Harry looked down at the bedspread again. "Okay. Thank you, Molly."

She smiled. "But if you really want to know about your parents, I know someone who was best friends with your father and very good friends with your mother. His name is Remus Lupin. I could ask him to come here if you want me to."

Harry looked up, smiling. "Could you? Really?"

"Of course."

"Thank you, Molly." Harry hugged her.

"Do you want to go play Quidditch?" She asked. "Did you know your father played? I can tell you that much."

"He did?"

"Chaser on the Gryffindor House team."

"Fred said you had to be really good to get on a House team!"

"Your father was very good." Molly said. "You look just like him too. There's only one thing stopping you from looking exactly like your father."

“What?”

“Those eyes of yours. Your eyes are exactly the same as your mother’s.”

“Did my father have a scar too?” Harry asked, his smile fading a bit.

Molly sighed. “A scar like that can only be caused by a Dark spell. When you survived a direct hit from the Killing Curse, it gave you that scar. No one else has a scar like that.”

“Really?”

“Really.”

XxXxX

“How badly does Lupin want to hide himself?” Molly groaned. She could not find a sign of Remus’s whereabouts any place. “I promised Harry I would find him.”

“Have you asked Albus?” Arthur asked.

“He’s looking as well. I’ve only told him this morning, he can’t be that amazing.”

Arthur walked over to the window and let in the owl that had been pecking on the pane. “Apparently he can.” He said, handing her the scroll of parchment attached.

“He’s found him.” Molly said, reading the letter.

Molly,

Dumbledore has just told me all about Harry. Thank you very much for taking him in as your own. I know how hard it must be with so many children of your own. But I’m very glad he isn’t be raised by Muggles and would be very pleased to see him. Please respond as soon as possible and tell me when you will be available.



Thanking you again,

Remus Lupin

Molly responded immediately, telling him that as soon as he could come, he was welcome.

XxXxX

The next morning, after Arthur had gone to work, Molly walked into Harry's bedroom. Ron was off somewhere else, probably gallivanting around the garden with Fred and George.

"Well, Harry, I found him, and he'll be coming tomorrow."

"Excellent!" Harry cried, running over to Molly and hugging her. "Thank you, Molly."

"He can't wait to see you."

XxXxX

All the children were in bed and Arthur and Molly were talking at the kitchen table when Remus knocked on the door. Molly answered it, surprised.

"I wasn't expecting you until morning."

"Yes, I'm sorry, I just wanted to talk with you about some things before Harry is awake." He said. Frankly, he didn't look his best. His clothes were shabby, his face was gaunt, and his hair was gray. "I hope you don't mind?"

"Not at all, come in." She said. "Can I get you anything?"

"No thank you." He said, sitting at the table. "I was just- er- wondering whether you would mind it if I told Harry I was a werewolf."

They had expected this subject to come up. Molly nodded. "We've been completely honest with Harry since he first started living here. The Dursleys were very cruel to him. And we'd hate to have him think of anyone like them. So we'd much prefer honesty. If you want to tell him you're a werewolf, go ahead."

"I'd just like to warn you that he might tell your other children."

"We've considered that." Arthur said. "And we don't mind as long as you don't. It's your secret, Remus. We're not going to tell you who to tell."

Remus nodded. "Who's Hermione?" He asked, pointing to the clock on the wall.

"Another foster child the Ministry pushed on us." Arthur laughed, and they explained the story about Hermione.

"Sounds awful." Remus said at the end. "H-Harry wasn't that bad...was he?"

Molly sighed and told him all about her meeting with Harry. His fists clenched tighter and tighter as she went on, and he seemed to sit taller and taller with each word. At the end, he was sitting straight up and his knuckles were ashen.

"Right." He cleared his throat. "Well...how is he now?"

"He's doing great." Molly assured him. "Right now he's sleeping, but as long as you don't wake him up, you can go see him."

"I'd love to." Remus said, standing. Molly showed him to Ron and Harry's bedroom and pointed to Harry's bed.

Remus knelt next to Harry's head and stared at him. The long, messy black hair, the soft features, the peaceful smile; it was James in miniature. Looking over at the side table, he even wore glasses. It had been so many years since he was that close to James's face, and it took a lot to convince himself that it wasn't his best friend in that bed.

"It's like I'm staring at James."

"You'll be convinced otherwise once he opens his eyes." Molly said in a distant, reminiscing voice.

Remus smiled, remembering seeing Harry as a little boy. "That's right. He has Lily's eyes."

He reached out and gently pushed some hair off of his forehead, careful not to wake him up.

The scar.

It was really there. The lightning bolt scar that had given him so much fame. The lightning bolt scar that everyone gaped at when they saw it. The lightning bolt scar that branded him as Harry Potter. The lightning bolt scar that was given to him by Voldemort. The lightning bolt scar that was perhaps the only of his features that he didn't inherit. The lightning bolt scar that could only remind Remus of one thing and one thing only.

James and Lily were dead.

XxXxX

"Harry, Remus is here." Molly said, waking up Harry at about nine the next morning. He opened his eyes, put his glasses on, and beamed. "Get dressed, he's downstairs."

"Great." He dressed as fast as his arms would let him and dashed downstairs as fast as his legs allowed him. Skidding to a stop in the kitchen, he grinned.

Their eyes met at once. Remus saw what Molly meant. He had almost forgotten how Lily's eyes looked. Over the years they had faded from his memory. Photographs, of course, they could show him what they were like, but it was different to see them on a living, breathing entity.

Remus stood and walked over to Harry. "Harry?"

"A-Are you Remus?"

He grinned. "Remus John Lupin, the one and only."

"Harry James Potter. I think I'm the only one with that name." He said. Remus laughed.

"You look exactly like your father. Except with your mother's eyes."

"That's what Molly said." He said.

"Molly was being honest." Remus said. "Was she when she said you have questions about your parents?"

"Yes. If you wouldn't mind, she said you might be able to tell me about them."

"I can." He said, turning to Molly. "Would you mind if we went and grabbed breakfast somewhere?"

"Not at all." Molly said, smiling.

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"So, how have you been, Harry? Professor Dumbledore told me about the Dursleys."

Harry hung his head. "I'm sorry."

"About what?" Remus asked. Harry looked up at him sadly.

"You were really good friends with my mum and dad. And I heard people talking about how sad it made them that I had been treated so badly, forced to grow up with Muggles. Those people only knew my parents as that, my parents. But you knew them better than that. So it must be harder for you, right?"

“Right.” Remus whispered. “But you’re happy now, with the Weasleys?”

He nodded. “I love it at the Weasleys.”

“Great.” Remus said. “What questions do you have about your parents?”

“I just want to know what they were like.” He said. “All I know is that they were killed by Voldemort and they loved me a lot. And that my father was a Chaser for the Gryffindor House team.”

“That he was. He was a great Quidditch player.” Remus smiled. “Loved to be on a broomstick. It took a lot to get Prongs off of one.”

“Prongs?”

“Yeah, Prongs.” Remus said. “We had a little group and we all had nicknames. Your dad was Prongs, because he could transform into a stag.”

“Really? Cool! What was your name?”

Remus sighed. “My name was Moony.”

“Why?”

“Because I’m a werewolf. I transform into a werewolf at full moons.”

“What’s a werewolf?”

“A werewolf is a person who at full moons, even when they don’t want to, transform into a big wolf. When they’re transformed, they don’t control anything they do. They could kill their best friend if they were close by; that’s how little control they have. That’s the reason you couldn’t live with me all this time.” He smiled. “Every full moon, when I transformed, your father and our friends Peter and Sirius—Wormtail and Padfoot—would come with me to a safe place, where I wouldn’t hurt anyone. They transformed into their Animagus forms. Your father was a stag, Sirius is a dog, and Peter was a rat. While I was a

werewolf, they would keep me from leaving the shelter and hurting anything.”

Harry looked down at his plate. “Sirius ‘is’? He’s still alive?”

Remus sighed. “Yes, he is still alive, however he is in Azkaban prison.”

“Why?”

“Because he was convicted of murdering Peter.”

“He what?” Harry said quietly but fiercely. “Why would he kill someone? Wasn’t Peter your friend?” Tears glistened in his eyes.

“Yes, Peter was our friend, however, Sirius was a closer friend to me, and I do not believe he would ever kill somebody, especially not Peter.” He said. “I know that Sirius wouldn’t kill if he had the choice.”

“Why would they think he killed someone?” Harry asked, pushing his glasses farther up his nose and sniffing.

“It was rumored that Sirius killed Peter because Peter was trying to get revenge on him for turning your parents over to Voldemort.”

“What?” Harry said, a tear streaking down his face.

“But they were wrong. I know they were wrong. Sirius would never betray Lily and James. He would never go to Voldemort’s side, no matter what they threatened him with.” Remus said, his jaw clenched tight and his eyes slightly glazed over with anger. “Sirius grew up in a house strong with the Dark Arts and he hated every minute of it. He ran away from his home and went to your father’s home. And he would never go to the side that supported Dark Arts, he would never betray your parents, I promise you that.”

Harry nodded.

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“Where’d Harry go?” Ron asked.

“He went to breakfast with Remus.” Molly told him.

“Okay. We’ll wait till he gets back to play Quidditch.” Fred said. With Harry, they could play two-a-side. Without him, they were back to having Ginny throw apples off-course at them.

Speaking of Ginny, she and Hermione were up in their room.

“They’re not playing Quidditch until Harry comes? Cool.” Ginny grinned after the twins left the room.

“Why is that cool? I thought you liked watching them play.”

“I do, but they never let me actually play. But sometimes when they’re not looking, I ride their brooms. It’s fun. Do you want to go out and try it?”

Hermione shook her head immediately. “There’s a lock on the shed.”

“I know how to open it without the key.” She took a hairpin out of her hair. “It’s easy.”

“You can pick the lock?” Hermione gaped. Ginny nodded. “So we’re just going to go breaking into the broom shed and fly their brooms? Do you have any idea how many rules we’d be breaking?”

“George says rules are meant to be broken.” Ginny said. Hermione sat back, thinking about how easily she could outsmart a six-year-old. Within seconds, she had a perfect argument and the perfect way to carry it out.

“Would you say that’s a rule?” Hermione asked. Ginny shrugged. “If it’s a rule that rules are meant to be broken, then wouldn’t that rule also be meant to be broken, so at any given time we are able to break the rule that rules are meant to be broken? So in fact, by saying ‘all rules are meant to be broken,’ it’s giving us a reason not to break the rules?”

Ginny pondered the paradox for a moment, then beamed. "Yes, it can mean that, but it can only mean that if we're breaking it. Since we're already breaking so many rules, why break another one? Come on, let's go."

A/N This chapter went a little strangely, I know, and I'm warning you, this is approaching a strange part of the story.



Disclaimer! I sadly do not own Harry Potter. If I did...I would still put this disclaimer to not give away my true identity as JK Rowling...maybe even write on my profile that I was a thirteen year old...insert evil laugh here...

A/N This is another chapter I just positively loved to write. Hell, I love writing this whole story. I hope you enjoy reading it as much as I enjoy writing it. I thank everyone who reads this story, as well as everyone who favorited or it or reviewed it. HOWEVER, I'd like to give special thanks to Amanda Burke on this, because I had completely forgotten about Scabbers. Thanks, and please to enjoy. : )

"Christmas! Christmas! Who doesn't love Christmas? The answer is no one! Everyone loves Christmas!" The twins could be found skipping around the house, much to the resemblance of their little sister Ginny, singing this song as loud as their lungs let them. It drove Molly up the highest wall in the Wizarding world, but it seemed to cheer up Harry and Hermione, who had dipped back into the Sir and Ma'am Chronicles as Christmas approached, so she did nothing to stop the singing. The twins, excited about their newfound freedom, had taken to bursting into song everywhere they could: on their broomsticks, in the garden, in their bedroom (even if nobody else was there, Molly often heard them as she was passing by), at the dining table; sometimes they would randomly jump on a counter, table, or couch and ask for everyone to sing with them in a rousing chorus of "Christmas! Christmas!"

Remus Lupin had been spending a lot of time at the Burrow over the last months, encouraged to stay for dinner practically every night by Molly, who said he was almost as skinny as Harry and Hermione. At these moments he merely laughed and took a seat next to Harry. He felt so close to James and Lily when he was with Harry, but it took no time at all to realize that James and Lily's son or not, Remus loved Harry. That kid was very interesting, you could never deny it.

When Bill, Charlie, and Percy joined them, the house got even wilder. To just about every Weasley child's dismay, someone named Auntie Muriel was coming for Christmas. Harry and Hermione did not understand why they did not want her at the house, because they

were under the impression that every Weasley was like whom they had become family with.

But they were very, very, very, very, very, very, very, very, very wrong. Very. Very. Very. Wrong.

“Get these bags for me, William; I’m eighty years older than you. Respect your elders.” She said. Bill took her bags, giving a mocking bow when she wasn’t looking, that earned him a glare from his mother, which scared him up the stairs. “Who are these too?” She boomed, nodding toward Harry and Hermione.

“We told you about them, Auntie Muriel, this is Hermione Granger, and this is Harry Potter.” Molly said. The two nodded and twitched. It was obvious they wished to run away. They now knew why no one wanted Muriel over for Christmas. She was a nightmare, and all nightmares reminded Harry and Hermione of the Dursleys and the Grangers.

Muriel raised an eyebrow. “Harry Potter is living in this rat trap?” When Harry tilted his head, Muriel continued. “You can’t tell me you like it here!”

“Actually, I do. There are a lot of things here I didn’t have at my aunt and uncle’s house.”

“Yes, I’m sure there is: infestation, rat droppings, shall I go on?” She boomed as Bill came down, followed by the twins, Percy, Charlie, and Ginny, who skipped down the steps.

“Ginevra, stop smiling like that, it’s disturbing.” Muriel ordered. Ginny’s smile disappeared. “Charles, William, your hair is getting absolutely ridiculous! Starting to look like these two!” She roared, jerking a finger at Ginny and Hermione. Turning around to go back upstairs, Charlie and Bill smirked, knowing how much long hair bothered not only Muriel but their mother.

“Why don’t you all go upstairs, I’ll call you down for dinner.” Molly said, trying to stop any more Christmas presents from her dear Aunt Muriel.

Hermione and Harry followed them all upstairs. As soon as her back faced Muriel, Ginny started smiling again, and by the time they had reached the top of the first staircase, the twins were singing another rousing chorus of their favorite—and very original, if it may be added—holiday tune. Hermione turned to Ginny.

“Is she always that mean?”

“Wait until she gets to know you.” Ginny grinned. Fred and George appeared out of nowhere, and it was only then the girls realized that the twins had stopped singing.

“She may not have time to.” George said.

“We’re getting Muriel back this year.” Fred nodded. As Hermione started to ask about it, they started singing again and were impossible to interrupt.

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Dinner that night was filled with insults from Muriel, shot at things that everyone knew would be offended if they were, you know, alive. Much to Harry’s anger, she was even shooting remarks at Remus, who smiled and ignored it, but it did not pass by that easily for Harry. Every time Muriel’s eyes glanced over to Remus, Harry summoned up every ounce of bravery he had to change the subject, which usually turned Muriel to him, asking why nobody had taught him not to interrupt people.

Right in the middle of dinner, a gray rat came shooting across the table, scampering straight over Muriel’s plate. She shrieked and fell backwards of her chair as Percy jumped over to catch the rat, screaming, “Scabbers!” Remus caught the rat and held it tightly as Molly helped Muriel stand. Just as they sat back down, a putrid smell filled the room from under Muriel’s chair.

“Blimey, Auntie Muriel, what’ve you been eating?” George asked. She groaned, mumbled again about respecting their elders, and stomped upstairs. George and Fred high-fived and cheered, bursting into a chorus of “Christmas! Christmas!” as Molly stood.

"I cannot believe you would do such a thing! Upstairs you two, now!" She yelled. The twins ran upstairs, laughing. Ginny was grinning larger than ever, Ron was howling with laughter, Bill, Charlie, and Percy, who had all learned better, were trying to hold in their laughter to not upset their mother but seemed to find themselves unable to do so, and Harry and Hermione were simply gaping at the hallway where Muriel and the twins had disappeared.

Muriel came back a second later, laden with her bags. Bill jumped up to help her, but she tugged the bags away from his grasp.

"I have never been so insulted in my life!" She yelled, stomping out the door and Disapparating as soon as she was able to. Molly stomped upstairs to deal with the twins while Arthur and the rest cleaned up the mess that had been made, opening the windows to let the smell of Dungbombs out of the room. Remus, however, still stood there, holding the rat called Scabbers. Percy spotted him.

"I'll take Scabbers." He said, holding out his hands, but Remus did not notice.

"Percy, how long have you had Scabbers?" Remus asked as the rat squirmed. He was inspecting it thoroughly, interested with it.

"Uh...six years, I guess. Why do you ask, Remus?" He asked. Everyone else had turned to Remus, abandoning the mess on the floor. "Is something wrong?"

"That's a long life for a common rat, isn't it?" He said quietly. Scabbers, tired of squirming, bit Remus hard on the fat of his thumb, but Remus only twitched, letting the blood run down his wrist. Remus's face tensed, his grip tightening around the rat. "Harry, hold Scabbers for a moment."

"O-okay, Remus. What's going on?" Harry asked as Remus transferred the rat to Harry's hands. Scabbers stopped squirming and stared at Harry.

"I thought so." Remus mumbled, taking out his wand. "Percy, has he always been missing a finger right there?"

"Yes, I believe so."

Remus pointed his wand at Scabbers. "This is surely interesting, isn't it, now?" He said. It seemed as though he was talking to the rat, which turned its attention to the wand. "Never imagined I'd see you again." His eyes narrowed. "You have five seconds to turn back into your human form until I force you. And I believe you are aware of how painful that process can be."

"What are you doing, Remus, it's just a rat!" Hermione said.

"It's not just a bloody rat, Hermione, it's much more." He said. "This rat is an Animagus." He pointed his wand at its tiny face. "Block all exits from this room. I'd like to have words with this man, and I'm sure Harry would too." Arthur, Bill, and Charlie all blocked exits from the kitchen. "Ready, Scabbers? Five, four, three, two..."

Harry was forced to let go of the rat as it grew. Its hair disappeared in some places and grew in others. His face expanded, his legs and arms grew, and his fur coat turned into raggedy old clothes. The man was short, thin, and had watery eyes. He was missing a finger, the same finger Scabbers had been missing.

Remus grabbed the man at the throat and shoved him against the wall, pointing his wand at him. Arthur gaped at the man, taking a long stride toward him.

"Peter?" Arthur breathed.

"What?" Harry roared, tears in his eyes. "This—this is Peter? Peter Pettigrew?"

"Yes, Harry, it is Peter Pettigrew." Remus said with a mad gleam in his eye. "Apparently he was never dead. Just cut off his finger to make it look so. Tell me, Peter, what do you have against our old friend Sirius?" He rammed him again against the wall, the sound of

the collision echoing through the room. "Why the hell did you frame him?"

"I didn't! Remus, I never meant to frame him, I never meant to turn in Lily and James!" Peter pleaded.

"YOU WHAT?!" Remus shouted, jabbing his wand into Peter's neck. "You betrayed them? All this time you were in your Animagus form, letting Sirius take the blame? You coward, you bloody coward!"

"Remus, what's going on?" Harry asked, tears running down his face.

"This man is the reason your parents are dead." Remus hissed. "This man is the reason Sirius Black is in Azkaban prison, he's the reason you were with the Dursleys the last six years, he's the reason you had to go through all that pain and SUFFERING!" Remus roared, spitting flying on Peter's face. "Do you know what all that put him through, Peter? Just because you're a coward? Just because you let Sirius go innocently to prison and because you turned Lily and James into Voldemort? He could have been killed, Peter, he could have died!"

"Remus, I never meant for all this to happen!"

"LIAR!" Remus shouted. "YOU FILTHY, DIRTY LITTLE LIAR! YOU BETRAYED LILY AND JAMES, YOU'RE THE REASON THEY'RE DEAD! THEY TRUSTED YOU! THEY TRUSTED ALL OF US! YOU'RE A MARAUDER, DAMN IT!"

He struck Peter across the face. Molly ran downstairs, followed closely by highly curious twins. Remus, face red with anger, didn't seem to notice them.

"Remus, you must trust me that I didn't want to!" Peter whined. "I couldn't help it! The Dark Lord was torturing me, what would you do?"

"Die." Remus grunted. "I would die before I gave away their location. Voldemort was going to kill Harry, and you would have been the reason. I hope you're happy, Peter. I hope you know what you

caused.” He pulled Peter away from the wall. “Come. We’re going to make Sirius’s Christmas.”

Peter’s eyes widened when he realized what Remus was planning. “No, no, Remus, please! I was scared! Please, not Azkaban!”

Remus turned on Peter, shoving his wand into his Adam’s apple. “I have been waiting six years to avenge Sirius and nothing is going to stop me now. He deserves better than Azkaban, and you,” Remus shook his head. “you deserve worse.”

“Wait, Remus!” Peter begged. “There is one person I think should have a say in this!”

Remus sighed and looked down at Harry. “Harry, what do you think?”

Harry stared at Peter. It was because of him his parents were dead and he had to spend the last six years with the Dursleys.

But if it hadn’t been for all that, he wouldn’t have met the Weasleys.

But they were still his parents.

Harry burst into tears again. Before running off upstairs, he spat at Pettigrew, “You’re the reason my parents died. I hate you. I don’t care what happens to you.”

XxXxX

“Merry Christmas, Sirius.” He mumbled to himself, ripping the square off his calendar. It was all he could do to keep track of days. The clock above his bed told him it was midnight, and therefore, Christmas morning. He remembered Christmas mornings at Hogwarts, with the other Marauders, opening gifts in the common room and ticking off Evans. The happiness he felt was insane...he didn’t even know how to begin. But the dementors had sucked the happiness out of him. Six years. Six miserable years in a deluxe security prison cell because Peter Pettigrew was a coward.

Suddenly, Sirius heard the locks clicking open. He sat up and watched the door as it creaked open. The light that poured in was much too much. He had been fed at sunset, when the lanterns were not yet lit and the sun was barely up, making the light very dim. Sirius was basically blinded by it, and it took almost five full minutes for his eyes to adjust. But when they did, he realized several people were talking to each other in hushed tones, though some were harsher than others.

“Black!” one snapped. “Come with us, now, you have some business that needs to be taken care of!”

Sirius stood up from his bed and followed them, staring at everything around him, soaking in all the scenery he had seen only flashes of in the last six years. Lanterns, clean walls, smooth, shiny stone floors, and out the window, the moon and stars. It had been so many years since he had seen the moon. It was almost full, and Sirius wondered what Remus was doing this exact moment. Probably something much more productive than he was doing.

They reached a room that Sirius recognized as the holding cell in which he had been placed before his trial. There, a shadow of a man holding another man was only slightly visible. But as they got closer, the shadow became more and more visible, and soon, Sirius could recognize the people.

“Moony? Wormtail?”

“Padfoot!” Remus cried, but Peter seemed to be too scared for his life and sanity to respond to this acknowledgement.

“What the hell’s going on?”

“Aren’t you surprised to see Mr. Pettigrew alive, Black?” The guard asked. Sirius glared at him.

“He was never dead. I’ve been trying to tell you that for six bloody years.”



“Sirius, he was in his Animagus form, he was a rat the last six years, just cut off his finger for evidence. Look!” Remus said, holding up Peter’s hand to show the missing finger.

Lost for words, Sirius stared at the four-fingered hand. The wizard behind the desk frowned.

“I don’t believe we have a registered Animagus who turns into a rat...” His voice trailed off. “We will want to hold you for the next few weeks until we can get a trial for you. Black,” He said, turning to Sirius. “As you have no Dark Mark so your only real charge was killing Peter Pettigrew, and he is obviously alive, after an hour or so of paperwork...you can leave. Happy Christmas.”

XxXxX

Remus walked into the Burrow, Sirius looking around the sky, the road, everything. Several times he bent down, grabbed a handful of dirt, and let it run down to the ground through his fingers, grinning. He breathed in a thousand deep breaths, in through his nose out through his mouth.

“I’ve never felt this good, Remus.” He sighed. “It’s brilliant, isn’t it?”

Smiling, Remus nodded. “Yeah. Great.”

“So this is where Harry’s been staying?” Sirius said brightly, though his smile faded. Remus had told Sirius everything about the Dursleys and the Weasleys as they waited for Molly’s response from their owl asking if Sirius could stay for Christmas.

“Yeah.” Remus said. “He’s really happy here.”

“That’s good.” Sirius agreed, walking up to the door. He knocked, Remus grinning and walking up behind him.

Molly answered the door. “Hello.”

Remus put his arm around Sirius’s shoulders. “Sirius, this is Molly. Molly, this is Sirius, Harry’s godfather.”

Sirius nodded. "I'd introduce myself and show you my thanks for taking in Harry properly, but unfortunately Azkaban doesn't support hygiene very much." Sirius grinned. Molly was reminded of Ginny when she saw the childish grin, but then hoped to God Ginny never ended up in Azkaban.

"You're welcome to wash here if you wish."

Sirius grinned at her. "You have to be the kindest person I have ever met."

After a long shower, using practically the whole bar of soap, Sirius put on the clothes that Remus had brought him. He ran downstairs, where Arthur, Molly, and Remus were all talking.

"Where is he?"

Remus grinned. "He's upstairs."

"I bet he's asleep by now. He didn't want to go to sleep because he wanted to apologize to Remus for running away, but he was getting very tired."

Sirius and Remus started to walk upstairs, and Remus turned to his friend. "Beware, Padfoot, Harry apologizes for everything. If he ever acts a bit strangely, don't get concerned. Some of him just thinks back to the Dursleys when he's around people he doesn't know well."

Remus quietly opened the bedroom door and saw Harry wide awake. He even had his glasses on. Remus grinned as Harry hopped out of bed and ran over. They closed the door to not disturb Ron, who was snoring loudly in his sleep.

Harry started immediately. "Remus, I'm sorry, I didn't mean to run from you like that, I was just upset because you were angry at Peter. And I don't really hate Peter. I just hate what he did to my parents and Sirius." He sniffed. "I'm sorry."

Remus smiled at Harry. "You never have to apologize to me, Harry, you know that." He stood up, grinning like Ginny. "Speaking of Sirius," He put his hand on Sirius's shoulder and pushed him forward. "Harry, I'd like you to meet your godfather, Sirius Black."

Sirius squatted down so he was eye level with Harry. He shook his head. "You look exactly like James. Except for those eyes...if those aren't Lily's eyes you can put me back in Azkaban right now." He hugged Harry. "How old are you then? Seven? Blimey, you look like you should be shaving and going out to pubs. Stop growing up for a few years, Harry, for the last six years I've only seen you in a picture I managed to smuggle into Azkaban. And in that you've got a diaper on."

Harry grinned. "Why is your name Padfoot?"

Sirius looked over at Remus. "Suppose it's only fair." He smiled at Harry. "Just don't tell Molly, I don't think she'll be too pleased about me doing this in the house." He turned into his Animagus form, a big, black dog. Harry gaped and scratched behind Sirius's ears.

"Cool!" He exclaimed in the quietest he could possibly show his enthusiasm. "I've always wanted a dog, but my aunt said they were too much of a mess when Dudley asked, so I never did."

Sirius turned back into a human, with a concerned look on his face. "Harry, tell me the honest truth. How horrible was it at the Dursleys?"

Harry looked down at the floor and shook his head. Sirius put his hands on Harry's cheeks, looking down at the same spot on the floor. "I'm so sorry, Harry. I wish I could have helped you."

"It wasn't your fault, Sirius. Peter was a bad person and lied. Molly says you shouldn't lie, that it's bad, and now I know why. It can get other people in trouble that they shouldn't be in." Harry said, lifting his head. Sirius nodded, smiling and looking up at Harry.

"That's exactly right, Harry. You shouldn't lie." He stood up. "Perhaps you should get some sleep. Father Christmas doesn't visit children who are awake."

Harry nodded excitedly. "Ginny and Ron told me all about him. He brings presents to us, doesn't he?"

"Only if you're asleep. We'll have all day tomorrow to catch up."

Harry grinned and ran off to bed. Sirius looked at Remus.

"Well, Moony, I think we can easily call this the greatest Christmas that could ever bless a couple Marauders."

A/N I had fun with the caps lock key this whole chapter, didn't I? Hmm... Anyway, this is the easiest story I have going right now to give a happy ending to every chapter. So I hope you like them. Again, thank you to everyone that reads this story, whether if you wake up every morning and cry out to the heavens if you don't have an email, just read it whenever you get the chance, or somewhere in between, I LOVE ALL OF YOU! I love you especially if you take the time to give me feedback. Everyone loves feedback!

Disclaimer! If you think I own Harry Potter, I suggest you go see your physician and get your reality checked.

A/N You remember a few weeks ago when I said I almost passed out reading the stats? Yeah...this time, I actually blacked out a few seconds. Then I took my contacts out and put on my glasses to make sure they were the same prescription. And then I debated asking my mother to set up an appointment with my optometrist...at one point I looked at my calendar to be sure it wasn't April Fool's Day...I still don't believe that over one hundred people are reading this story...words cannot express how thankful I would be if one person read my story. Just...wow...Please, enjoy this chapter while make sure my brother didn't hack the website to screw with me...

While most children on Christmas morning anxiously and greedily await stockings full of presents, Harry Potter was not waiting for such foolish things. Ha ha, he laughed at that! No, his presents had already come, and he wouldn't trade them for a world of toys, sweets, or Quidditch-related merchandise. Sleeping was not exactly a priority the night after Harry discovered that while his father may be dead, hope still lied in the concept of the Marauders, and nobody—not God, Allah, Krishna, Jehovah, Jesus, Merlin; whatever the hell you call your god—was going to take Sirius or Remus away from him. No matter how much they tried.

As soon as he heard Ginny was up, Harry shoved his glasses up his nose, dressed at top speed, and dashed downstairs. However, he didn't have to move three feet before he crashed into someone. Rapidly apologizing and shutting his eyes tight, he slowly stood up, keeping his closed eyes averted. But when he remembered that he wasn't in the Sir and Ma'am Chronicles anymore, he opened his eyes and looked up to the person he had crashed into, seeing Sirius, wide-eyed and so obviously scared, looking down at him, and armful of presents precariously leaning out of his arms.

"H-Harry? Are-are you okay? Wh-what was that?" He asked, dropping all the presents and kneeling down next to him. "What's wrong?"

“N-nothing.” Harry said, giving Sirius a reassuring smile. “Nothing’s wrong, I just—sometimes I can’t help but do things like that. Six years of habit, you know?” He laughed uncomfortably, then changed the subject immediately. “Who are those for?” He asked, pointing to the presents. “Remus?”

“No, Harry, they’re for you.”

The color drained from Harry’s face; every last bit of it. “Did you buy those all for me?”

“Yes.”

“Why?” Harry asked, his voice slightly cracking. “I-I don’t understand, why did you get all those for me?” He looked up at Sirius, who was ashen-faced and disturbed. “You could have spent your money on anything, why did you spend it on me? I—I just don’t—I don’t deserve all these things, Sirius, why did you bother?”

Sirius placed his hands on Harry’s shoulders and looked him in the eye. “Harry, you deserve every Knut in my bank account. I want to spend it on you.”

“But why, Sirius?”

“Because I thought I had lost you, Harry. I really care about you, and I want you to know that in every way possible.” He said. Harry nodded.

“I didn’t get anything for you though.”

“You’ve been sleeping since I got out of Azkaban, Harry, I didn’t expect you to get me anything. And even if you had time, I don’t care if you get anything for me.”

“But I want to show you I care too.”

Sirius smiled. “That’s very kind of you, Harry, but I neither need nor want for you to prove that you care about me by getting me things.”

Harry nodded, but he still didn't understand why Sirius had spent money on him. Perhaps the best present the Dursleys had ever given him was missing his head when they swung a baseball bat at him. The only thing that cost was a bit of his uncle Vernon's pride.

Ginny poked her head out of her bedroom and blushed. "Sorry, didn't mean to interrupt. I just heard a noise."

"It's okay, Ginny. This is Sirius Black. Sirius, this is Ginny. She's the youngest, and the only daughter. Well, the only daughter with red hair." Harry said. Sirius laughed and motioned for Ginny to come out. She skipped toward them, beaming.

"Merlin." He said. "If you had Harry's eyes, I would swear I was looking at Lily." Ginny grinned larger than she had since she woke up.

"Don't get ahead of yourself, Padfoot, you'll find she has a much longer fuse than Lily." Remus said, walking up to them. "How was your night, Harry?"

"I couldn't sleep." He admitted. "I was too excited."

"About what?"

"Well...you!" Harry exclaimed. Sirius seemed taken aback. "For six years, I thought that the Dursleys were my only connection to my parents. And now, in three months, I've already found three. Two that I'd actually like to talk with."

Remus laughed. Sirius grinned and looked up at him. "Doesn't that sound like something that would come out of James's mouth?"

"Right down to the punctuation mark." Remus sighed, ruffling Harry's already ruffled hair. Harry grinned much like the girl next to him, who Remus turned to next. "Hey, Ginny. How are you this morning?"

"Good. How are you?"

"Fine. Have you opened your presents yet?" He asked.

Ginny shook her head. Sirius frowned. "Why not? It's Christmas morning."

"I'm waiting for Hermione to wake up. She's never had a real Christmas before, and I wanted to wait for her to wake up so I could share mine with her."

Sirius turned to Remus, who nodded, trying not to smile. These were the kinds of things Ginny did, and it was odd, especially when you looked at what her brothers were. Ginny, grinning, waved goodbye to them.

"I'm going to wait for Hermione. Bye bye." She said, skipping away, closing the door behind her. Sirius stood and turned to Remus.

"How old is she?"

"Six." He said. They both grinned, and at the same time, said, "Doesn't that seem like something Lily would do?"

"My mum would do that?" Harry said excitedly.

"Your mother would bring starving, homeless strangers round for dinner some nights." Sirius said, shaking his head. "Used to drive your father mad. He was a foul sharer, once he broke my hand when we were fighting over a Beater's bat."

"Probably didn't help that you're a rotten sharer, too." Remus laughed. He pointed to the pile of presents. "Want to open some of those, Harry?"

"Can I?" He asked, gaping.

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"Ginny?" Hermione asked, seeing the girl patiently squinting, though grinning still, at one of Hermione's larger books. "What's going on? How come you haven't opened your presents yet?"



"You're awake!" Ginny said, closing the book. "That has big words in it." She mused, nodding.

"Yes, they are rather complicated." Hermione conceded, not even really knowing what she had been reading. "Why haven't you opened your gifts? I thought that was the whole point of Christmas morning?"

"Exactly." Ginny said, grinning. "You thought. You didn't know. You haven't had a real Christmas yet. I wanted to wait for you so we could share a really good Christmas."

Hermione smiled. "That was really sweet of you Ginny."

Ginny flashed her teeth. "And the best part is, Auntie Muriel's gone!" She leaned forward, still sitting cross-legged on the bed. "Harry's godfather is here instead."

"Oh, he got out of prison?" Hermione said, trying to make is sound mundane and conversational, but realizing that those words in that order could not be made into small talk.

Ginny nodded. She had been told the story of Sirius Black and Peter Pettigrew only the night before. Her parents, who had always tried to shield her from such things, had never told her in-depth what happened to the Potters, so they were forced to shortly after Harry was. However, even that did not stop the questions from flooding in. Ginny, even four months after Harry had arrived, four months after she had been told, was still asking questions.

Wow...four months. It seemed no different to have breakfast with Harry as it did to have breakfast with Molly. Ginny thought that it seemed like such a short time, four months, because Harry was now her brother. She just thought it odd.

"Ginny?"

She was snapped out of her trance by Hermione's voice. It seemed rather concerned, and her voice only amplified this affect. "Is something wrong, Hermione?"

“No, no...I’ve just never seen you so...pensive.”

“What?”

“Deep in thought.”

“Oh.” Ginny said, not choosing to defend herself. She thought about things a lot more than people assumed she did. With six brothers—no, seven, and a sister—it was easy to think about everything and anything. “Well, don’t you want to open your presents?”

“It seems like I just did this for my birthday.” Hermione sighed. “Time has never gone faster than when I’m here. At my parents’ house, time moved slower than anything.”

“Don’t worry, Hermione.” Ginny grinned. “You have your whole life to spend here, with us. And your whole life is a long time.”

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“Hermione, we want to talk to you about something.” Molly said, shooting a look at Arthur. They finally got Hermione alone; it had taken all week to get to this part.

“What?” Hermione asked politely, struggling to keep eye contact with Molly. She was still having trouble with that. She knew it was okay to look at them, but sometimes got uncomfortable doing it.

“The judge that held your hearing wrote us a letter, and before we responded, we wanted to ask you about it.” Arthur said.

Hermione blinked. “W-why?”

“Because it was concerning your adoption.” Molly said.

“Adoption?” Hermione said in a small voice. “I-I thought I was just a foster child?”

“You are.” Molly said. “Unless you choose that you would prefer to give us custody of you. Which...we would be glad to do if you wanted it.”

“I don’t understand.” Hermione said, but nonetheless took the shot at it. “So if I chose to be adopted, you two would become my parents, and—I wouldn’t be a Granger anymore?”

“Er,” Arthur stuttered, staring at his wife nervously. “Well...that’s one way to say it...”

“I don’t want to be a Granger.” Hermione said quickly. Whenever she was saying something very big, like that, she said it quickly, as if she wanted it to be lost in translation. “They were horrible to me, and every time I hear my last name all I think of is getting hurt. I never want to think about that. So...will—will you adopt m-me?”

“Of course, Hermione.” Molly said. “We love you very much, and we would be so happy to adopt you.”

Hermione nodded, seemingly glad that her feelings were out and she had to say no more. “So I’ll be changing my last name?”

“Only if you want.”

“I do.”

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“Hey, Harry.” Sirius said. Harry grinned.

“Can I have a nickname?”

Sirius and Remus exchanged glances. “W-what?”

“You two and my dad had nicknames. Can’t I have one?”

“Well, yes, Harry, but...” Remus sighed. “Our nicknames were all based on what animals we transformed into. You don’t have the magical education to become an Animagus, and I will be protecting

you with my life to stop you from becoming a werewolf, so we'll have to wait on the nickname."

"Okay." Harry said, sounding a tad disappointed.

Sirius, with a pout on his face, compromised. "How about we call you Prongs Jr. for the time being?"

Harry grinned. Remus shook his head, sighing and chuckling at the same time.

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That afternoon, all the Weasley children played with their new toys and, in Hermione and Percy's case, read their new books. At dinner, while the two bookworms had a lengthy, spirited discussion on a book Hermione was reading that Percy read in his past, everyone else talked about Quidditch and school and work.

"Oh yeah..." Sirius said as an afterthought to Arthur's story about something Muggle. "I probably need a job, huh?"

"Yes." Remus agreed. "Usually that is the role of a productive member of society."

"What kind of job do you want, Mr. Black?" Ginny asked politely. Sirius laughed so suddenly he choked on his turkey, leaving an also chuckling Remus to thump him on the back. Ginny's grin turned into a look of confusion, and several people around the table, including Harry, looked questioningly at the pair.

"Sorry, Ginny, it's just—I've been in Azkaban six years, where I was referred to as 'Black,' and before that, I was known only by 'Padfoot' or 'Sirius.' Nobody's called me 'Mr. Black' since I was fifteen. Even then all my professors took to calling me Sirius."

"I'm sorry." She said, smiling again. Remus chuckled.

"No, don't apologize. Just call me Sirius; it will be much more comfortable for all of us." He said. "And I don't know what kind of job

I'd want. I've grown to rather hate the Ministry since they chucked me in Azkaban without any hearing...suppose I could always get a job in the Leaky Cauldron." He said, grinning at Remus, who laughed.

"Unless someone goes off at you for an hour."

Sirius screwed up his face into a mock-furious expression and said in a high-pitched voice, "I'm not giving you an excuse for you and James to run off and get drunk in some pub all night because the drinks are free!" They both laughed, and Arthur chuckled too.

"Let me guess: Lily?" He said.

"Always afraid we'd get pissed." Sirius chuckled.

"I mean, it's not like they got any tattoos to prove it, right?" Remus scoffed.

"You have tattoos?" Harry asked, gaping at Sirius, who laughed.

"Yeah, James and I got them, apparently, when we were really drunk once. Remus laughed at us all day after that. James ended up getting your mother's initials right over his heart, but I didn't have a girlfriend at the time, so I probably thought I was being funny and I got the same thing. So Harry, I have your mother's initials over my heart."

"What do you mean you were probably joking?" Ron asked.

"Well, you see Ron, alcohol," Sirius caught Molly's stare. It was more frightening than any look Lily had ever given him. "is very bad, and you should never drink it, because if you drink too much, you won't remember anything after you've had too much. I don't remember the night I got a tattoo in the least bit. But I filled in the blanks when James and I woke up with splitting headaches only to be made worse by Lily's screaming."

He glanced over at Molly, who was looking determinedly at her plate.

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All the children were in bed, and Molly collapsed into a chair across from Sirius and Remus, next to her husband, who passed her a large cup of tea. She groaned. "I will never be happier than when Ginny is out of her question-phase."

"How do you know it's a phase?" Remus asked.

"Everything is a phase with Ginevra Molly Weasley." Arthur said. "Bill said he found it miraculous that every time he comes home for Christmas, he finds her completely different from how he left her that summer."

Sirius chuckled. "If I'm not mistaken, she's one of the first girls born into the Weasley family for quite a while, isn't she?"

"Nearly five generations." Arthur mumbled. "You should see my family around her. You'd think she was royalty."

"And that hasn't gone to her head?" Sirius said.

"Ginny has grown up her whole life around older brothers." Molly said. "Loads of them. Anything pompous that goes to her mind is erased minutes later. She doesn't have time to let it get to her head."

"Harry isn't like that to her, is he?" Sirius asked. Molly, Arthur, and Remus all shook their heads.

"He goes mental if he pokes her too hard. The lack of punishment is still bothering him." Molly said.

"Like this is all an act and at any given moment we're going to beat him." Arthur sighed. He looked at his wife, who nodded, then turned back to Sirius. "Sirius, we were wondering...because you are his godfather, and were great friends with Lily and James...Would you want to—?"

"As long as you're comfortable with him staying here, and he's happy, he's staying in this house."

"We love Harry and would never want him to leave us." Molly said immediately. "But if you wanted to take him, raise him yourself..." Her voice trailed off.

"Molly," He said. "I saw you today. I know you love Harry. At dinner when I was telling those stories about James, Remus, Peter, Lily, and I—I could tell you were uncomfortable with some of the subject matter, but then you saw the look on Harry's face and you didn't say anything. You care about him, Molly, you want to see him happy. And he's happy here, he loves it here, he loves you." Sirius leaned back. "That's all I ever want. Is for him to be loved by people he loves back. I'm not going to take him away from here."

"Good." Molly said, letting out a breath she hadn't been aware she was holding.

"As long as I get to visit him." Sirius said. Molly and Arthur both nodded fervently.

"Of course you'll be able to visit him." Arthur said.

"As much as you like." Molly agreed. Sirius sat back and took a deep breath, looking at the clock on the wall, but realizing he would not get the time from reading it.

"Why are Harry and Hermione on that clock?"

"It tells us where the family is." Arthur said. "Harry and Hermione are just as much our family as anyone with red hair."

A/N I wanted to get some Sirius/Remus interaction into this story. And it will be just that. Interaction. NOT SLASH! This will not turn into that. Anyway, Hermione's adoption may have seemed...belated...but I had to change her name to Weasley for something that happens later in my story that I had a great idea for and I hope you all love because I know I do and this sentence has gone a really long time without any punctuation. As said earlier, I love people who read my story but I love people who review even more (I know, I shouldn't practice favoritism, but who can help it?)

Disclaimer! Hark! I heard you heard that I own Harry Potter! Ha ha ha...said person must get a sense of reality, because I am not J.K. Rowling...

A/n This is three years after the last chapter. It is obvious in the chapter, but I'll tell you anyway. Hermione, Harry, Ron, and Ginny are the only ones not to go to Hogwarts yet, Bill is in Egypt, Charlie is in Romania, and Sirius and Remus are living in Grimmauld Place. Thank you soooooo much for reading this story, because I would not have half the motivation I have to write this story if it weren't for the fact that people actually read it. The other half comes from proving to my teachers that I'm not worthless! Yay! They all think I am, except my language teacher from last year, who went on about me for nearly a whole class period because, in one hour, I wrote a perfect, 2,000 word essay for my state writing test...when the state of California only asks for 500 to 700 words.

"Yes, Mother!" Ginny groaned, closing her book and walking downstairs. Harry put his dish in the sink, winked at her, and bid Molly a farewell. "Where are you going, Harry?" Ginny asked.

"Sirius's." Harry said, grabbing some Floo Powder out from the flowerpot on the mantle. Ginny sat down at the kitchen table.

"Did you want something, Mum?" She asked, sighing slightly. Molly shot her a look, which Ginny intelligently ignored. "How can I be of service to you?"

"Just go help your brother de-gnome the garden."

"You're sticking me in a garden with Ronald for two hours? What did I do?" Ginny started to complain, but the arrival of Hermione stopped her. Even after three years, Ginny still hated to argue with anyone in front of her sister, because Hermione was still often reminded of the Sir and Ma'am Chronicles. She stood, glared at her mother for a minute to tell her that it was not over, and walked outside into the garden. Molly smiled, knowing that Ginny had only obeyed her because Hermione was there, and mused having Hermione around her more often.



“Hello, Hermione.” Molly said, hugging her daughter. Hermione smiled.

“Hi Molly.” She sat down in the chair Ginny had been in just a moment ago. “Where’d Ginny go?”

“To go de-gnome the garden with Ron.” Molly said. Hermione stood up.

“Oh. Then I’ll go help them.” She said. Molly stopped her, and Hermione looked up at her, confused. “Molly, what’s wrong?”

Molly cleared her throat. “Sit down please, I want to talk to you about something.” She sighed. Hermione sat down at the table, and Molly sat across from her. She looked like she wanted to say something, but didn’t. “Hermione, it was three years ago today.”

Blinking, Hermione tried to find out what it was the anniversary of. When she remembered, she sat back in the chair and looked out the window into the garden, where Ginny had “accidentally” thrown a gnome at Ron’s face. “Right. So they’re out of prison, then?” The gnome was now attacking Ron.

“Yes.” Molly said. “And I was wondering if you wanted to...because of those stomachaches you’ve been having—”

Ron was now attacking Ginny, who was on the ground in laughter. “I don’t care what disease I might have, I’m not going to see my parents again. They aren’t even my parents. She’s not my mother, you are. He’s not my father, Arthur is!” She snapped, saying it all at a very fast speed, obviously frustrated. Then she closed her eyes and took a deep breath. “I’m sorry, Molly, it’s just...the thought of them being able to hurt people—it scares me to know that they’re out of prison and out on the streets, Molly, it scares the daylights out of me.” Tears formed in her eyes, fogging the view she had of Ginny dodging every blow Ron threw at her.

Molly took her hands. “Hermione, they can’t hurt you anymore. And you know that not a soul wants a dentist with a prison record. Soon

they will literally be on the streets. Don't worry about it, Hermione, please."

She nodded. "But I'm worried about what's happening to me."

"It's probably just stress, dear, you've been under a lot of it lately."

"Yeah," Hermione sighed. "Stress."

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"Padfoot? Moony?" Harry called, stepping out of the fireplace and shaking soot out of his hair. "Are you here?"

"In the kitchen!" Remus's voice came. Harry ran into the kitchen, greeted by the grins of his godfather and Remus.

"Hey, Prongsie." Sirius said, clapping Harry on the shoulder. Harry smirked. Sirius had taken to altering his nickname, so Harry often went from 'Prongsie' to 'Lil' Prongs' to 'Prongs, Jr.' "How's it going over at the Burrow? Ginny and Molly still arguing?"

"All the time." Harry said. "Except for when Hermione is around. Molly reckons all the rebellion is just another phase, like how she asked all those questions during the Sir and Ma'am Chronicles. She thinks that she's upset that Charlie left just like Bill did."

"Yeah, Molly the psychoanalyst." Remus laughed. "Well, care for a spot of lunch?"

"Would love some." Harry said, sitting down next to them. "How's it been going around here?"

"The full moon is coming up next week." Remus groaned. Sirius rolled his eyes.

"You'll live, Moony." He assured him. "You've transformed since you were younger than Prongs Jr."

Remus sighed and placed several plates on the table. Harry looked at them and laughed. "You're like Molly. She never lets me eat less than three servings. But still, she's been complaining I'm too skinny for three years."

"Well, you've got about seven to catch up on."

They all started chuckling. Though they never really joked about what the Dursleys did to Harry, they often broke into chuckles to downplay its importance. This only happened at Grimmauld Place though, because at the Burrow, everyone was a little more open about how they felt. With Sirius and Remus, they masked everything with laughter. Every time Sirius looked at Harry, he had to make a joke to stop himself from getting too upset over James and Lily, Marauder and Honorary Marauder. He remembered that on their wedding day, he had gone into the room where the bridal party was getting ready, just minutes before he was supposed to be walking down the aisle to stand as best man, and kneeled down in front of Lily. She stared at him like he was mad, then her eyes widened with confusion as he pulled out a tiny, black, velvet-covered ring box. He had opened it and presented to her the small pin that all the Marauders had. It was simple and only one square inch, but it was a painted replica of the Marauder's Map, with a calligraphy 'M' on it. He had smiled up at her and asked her.

"Will you be a Marauder?"

She had accepted the pin, and, much to Sirius's surprise, pinned it to the strap of her wedding dress. During the ceremony, James had seen it on her dress and reached to feel his own, which he had on his lapel. She had smiled at him, proud to be accepted by his friends as an Honorary Marauder.

Sirius stood from the table where Harry and Remus were still talking and enjoying lunch. He excused himself for a moment and ran upstairs to the attic that nobody but him knew about. All the while, tears were running down his face as he remembered James and Lily. Harry was just like James. Except those damn eyes. Every time Sirius looked into those eyes, he felt all the warmth of Lily, all the kindness and love.

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“Hermione? There was an owl for you, dear.” Molly smirked, approaching the bedroom, where Ginny was changing into clean clothes after her shower. Hermione was nowhere to be found.

“Privacy is often hard to come by when you have seven brothers, Mum.” She said. “But usually seeing me without a shirt on chases them away.”

Molly shook her head. “Hmm, can’t say the same is true for me. Where’s Hermione?”

Ginny shrugged. “She wasn’t here when I came in. Maybe she’s off to talk to with Ronald again. You know how much they love to talk.” Ginny grumbled. “Now could you close the door, please?”

“Speaking of Ronald,” Molly said. “Don’t think I’m blind. How’s a week?”

“Just close the door.”

Molly rolled her eyes and closed the door. Her daughter had become more and more sarcastic and smiled less and less as the years went on. She often questioned Ginny about this, many people did, but Ginny would simply chuckle and sit there in silence. That was her warning. If you continued speaking after her warning, you would go down. In addition to this, Ginny didn’t care the least bit when her mother punished her. Molly didn’t even have to say the malfeasance, because as she had learned, Ginny always did something wrong. Of course, she would only admit to doing something. She would never admit what that something was.

After searching the possible rooms Hermione could be, Molly looked up on the roof: Hermione’s hiding place. Whenever she, Harry, or Ginny needed to think, they would go onto the roof to avoid being bothered. Molly knew about this, and they knew she knew about it, but still, they went up there, because Molly bothered them less when they were on the roof.

“Hermione?” She said. Hermione whirled around, but calmed when she saw Molly standing there. Molly immediately knew what she had been thinking about. “Hermione, we’ve been over this before. You’re eleven years old. We’ve adopted you. You even wanted to drop the Granger from your name and change it to Weasley. They can’t hurt you anymore, Hermione, I promise you.”

She hugged her knees closer to her chest. “Y-you always know exactly what I’m thinking about. Just by how I’m acting. My—she never did that. She—she didn’t even care what I was thinking about, she just—how bad was it, how bad was I?”

Hermione asked this question a lot. She remembered everything from her painful childhood, but the first few days she was at the Burrow seemed a complete and total blank. Molly wrapped an arm around her daughter.

“You were just as you should have been.” Molly said. “You were confused. How were you supposed to know that not all parents abuse and neglect their children?”

“I—I’ve read books about happy families, I had then. In school, all my—none of my schoolmates were abused! They were all well fed, they never had as many injuries as I did! My parents never allowed me to tell anyone what happened! I should have known that not all adults were going to hurt me. None of my teachers did! And you’re nice, you came off as one of the kindest people I had ever met! Why couldn’t I just—why, Molly?” She sobbed, burying her face into Molly’s shoulder.

“Hermione, you knew nothing about happy families. You think you did, but reading it in books means nothing. Back then it seemed like a possibility, and when you read it in books you pictured it like the text said. But now you picture it with your imagination. Just like if Ron read—okay, bad example—just like if Percy read about the Grangers or the Dursleys before you or Harry came along. He would know they exist, but he wouldn’t be able to imagine it. You knew that happy, loving families existed, but you couldn’t imagine yourself as part of

one. Now, you are part of a big, loving, happy family that supports you and wouldn't dream of hurting you."

With tears still running down her face, Hermione turned her head and looked up at Molly. "How is it you always know exactly what to say?"

"I'm a mother of nine." Molly laughed. "Speeches and lectures are not something I have trouble with. Luckily I have a few good ones."

"Shame they don't have red hair." A voice came. Molly whirled around.

"Ginny, what are you doing up here?"

"Harry wants to be Prongs, Jr. for the night and you've got another owl about the twins." She snorted with laughter, covering her mouth with her hand to try to cover the grin on her face.

"What have they done this time?!"

Ginny laughed again. "It's actually quite funny..."

"Ginevra Weasley, tell me right now!"

"They—er—they put on a fireworks show in the Great Hall. Apparently one 'accidentally' went awry and landed in Snape's dinner plate, splattering steak-and-kidney pie all over his face." Ginny said, no longer even trying to cover her laughter. Hermione sighed and shook her head, but Molly stood up, groaning.

"Go tell Harry he can stay with Sirius and Remus and let me deal with your pyromaniac brothers." Molly said. Ginny laughed again, so hard she had to lean against the wall for support. Molly glared at her, but it had no effect. "Would you like to change your punishment to a week and a half?"

Ginny cocked an eyebrow. "For finding something funny?"

"No." Molly said. "I'm sure there's something else you've done lately that deserves punishment."

“Whatever.” Ginny mumbled as Molly stalked off. The former made her way over to her sister, hands stuffed into her pockets. “Hey, ’Mione. How’s it going?”

“I’ll live, I suppose.” She chuckled. Ginny half-smiled and sat down next to her sister. Hermione looked at Ginny’s half-smirked and shook her head. “Remember when you used to smile with your full mouth? And how we could never get you to stop?”

Ginny shook her head, too. “Remember when you used to resort to a book when you needed to think?” Ginny said, raising her voice slightly. “People change, okay?”

“What’s wrong, Ginny?” Hermione asked quietly. Ginny sighed and looked out at the horizon.

“Today’s the day, huh? Three years ago today, sis. It seems impossible.”

Hermione nodded. “It seems as though we’ve been sisters forever, hasn’t it?” She sighed. Ginny turned to Hermione, that look in her eyes. Hermione was all too familiar with that look. It was the look Ginny gave when she was about to ask a “little-girl” question, as Ginny had grown to call them. “Little-girl” questions were questions Ginny asked that seemed rather naïve, like when a young child asks their arguing parents “Are you gonna get a divorce?”.

“Do you think they’ll try to take you away from us?” She asked. Tears were swimming in both their eyes as Hermione answered.

“I can’t promise they won’t, Ginny. But if they try, they’ll fail. That I can promise.”

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“What on Earth did you do, anyway?” Hermione asked when Ginny reminded Ron that she couldn’t go out and play Quidditch, due to the fact that she was still grounded for two more days. Ginny rolled her eyes.

“I threw a gnome at Ron’s face. Or I put spiders in his bed. Or I put his favorite T-shirt in the fire for revenge because he splattered paint all over my favorite jeans.” She said, tapping her chin. “I dunno which one Mum caught me doing, but it had to be one of those.”

Hermione gave her a reproachful look. “You really should be nicer to him, Ginny. He’s your brother. You’re nice to Bill, Charlie, Harry, and the twins! Why aren’t you the same toward Percy and Ron? They’re just as much your brothers as the rest, and they care about you just as much as the rest.”

Ginny’s response, which Hermione knew would make no sense to a brain that thought logically, was cut off by a sudden, familiar voice growing clearer and clearer.

“Hermione!” Harry sang, walking into the girls’ bedroom. He was holding a thick envelope made of yellow parchment that was addressed in green, shining ink. Ginny looked at it in longing, and Hermione raised her eyebrows.

“What is it?” She asked.

“That’s your Hogwarts acceptance letter!” Ginny cried.

Hermione took the letter from Harry, carefully peeled off the seal, and gently folded up the envelope. She extracted the letter from the envelope as if it were an archaeological masterpiece dug up from a civilization a million years old. After quickly reading over it, her eyes traveled upward to Harry and Ginny.

“I-I’m really a witch.” She said softly. “I can—I’m a witch.”

Ginny ran up and hugged Hermione. “Congratulations, Hermione!”

Hermione looked at the letter again and smiled. She hugged Harry and quickly excused herself and ran to Ron’s room. Since Charlie and Bill were in different counties, the room assignments had changed. Ron and Harry took over Percy’s room in the attic, Percy took the twins’ old room, the twins took Ron and Harry’s old bedroom, the girls took



Charlie's room, and next to them, Bill's old room stayed open for when he came to visit.

"Ron!" She cried, knocking on the door. He opened the door and she showed him the letter. He grinned and allowed her to hug him.

"This is great, Hermione!" He said, putting his arm around her shoulder and holding out the letter in front of them. "You never believed me when I told you that all Weasleys get their wands."

"Well," Hermione said, blushing and looking at the ground sheepishly. "I'm not really a Weasley."

Ron groaned. "You're just as much of a Weasley as I am. Look, do you want proof?" He asked. Turning to the first page of the letter, he pointed to the salutation.

Dear Miss Weasley,

"Weasley. It doesn't say Granger, Hermione."

A/n Sorry! This was a little shorter than the other ones, but don't hate me! I mostly just added this little part to tell you that the Grangers were in jail. Concerning last chapter's A/n, this was NOT the reason why Hermione had to have her last name Weasley. That you will find out...considerably later.

Also, updates will be slow due to an excessive amount of homework the teachers of CMS (yes, I'm still in middle school, don't poke fun!) have been giving us to "smarten us up" for the state tests in April. Unfortunately, if I do not do well on the state tests, the school could take away electives and instead make us take encore classes, which is basically nice talk for remedial (you take an extra class in whatever area you scored the lowest in, language, math, or science. Usually I score the same in all three, so I get to take the advanced language class which is as boring as all hell). So every morning I awake and do laps in my swimming pool of homework. I will try my hardest to update regularly! But my list of priorities goes as following: homework/school/get smarter, eat, bathe, sleep, write, play guitar. But you've made the top five! I STILL LOVE YOU!

Insanely long author's note is now over.

Disclaimer! I am NOT J.K. Rowling. She is a much better writer than me and has an imagination I simply cannot top. Without her, I would not be writing this, nor would I be writing at all past the school requirements.

A/n I LOVE YOU ALL! Spring break is so close I can reach out and touch it and hug it and kiss it and perform a celebratory dance with it. You all have been SO supportive by reading and reviewing and favoriting and alerting that I started writing chapters during my history class when I was supposed to be taking notes (oops? Oh well, I pass the tests anyway). I skipped over some things like Ron's birthday, Harry's birthday, and them both getting their letters, but my make-shift beta-reader (my best friend who sits next to me in history class) told me that this chapter was better than all that stuff. If you want, I could put those chapters in, but for right now, this is the chapter. So I want to dedicate this chapter to all of you, her, and especially PrettyFanGirl! I wrote this whole chapter determined to try to top her story. If you haven't read it yet, it's called Book Seven and Three-Quarters and it's the best fanfiction I've read on this site!

And now, with no further ado, here is the latest chapter of The Sir and Ma'am Chronicles.

It had happened many times before. A Weasley went off—on most occasions it was even more than one—and climbed on that scarlet train to go to Hogwarts and train to become a wizard. But this time, there were many differences.

Difference number one: one of them was a Potter. As much as they wanted to convince themselves that this boy was a Weasley, you look at his hair, you look at his eyes, and then you look at his scar, and you are convinced he is Harry James Potter, not Harry James Weasley. He was getting on the train that day, and he would wave goodbye to his godfather, his foster family, and Remus. As much as they wanted his parents to be there, they knew that if his parents were there, they would have missed out on the last four years. It was a confusing phenomenon. At the same time, they wanted Harry to have known his parents and to have never gone to live with the Dursleys, but then also wanted not to have missed out on the last

four years, which they certainly would have done had James and Lily lived.

Difference number two: the first Weasley sister would be attending Hogwarts this year. She was fourth youngest, making her the “older sister,” to some and the “younger sister” to others, something that had taken almost all four years for some of them to get used to. Hermione was still her nervous, shy self, but something had changed inside her, and now, she was excited. She was going off to Hogwarts with two of her best friends—no, five of her best friends—no, five of her brothers.

Difference number three: when Molly and Ginny went home that day, Ginny would remain the only Weasley left. Year after year her brothers came and went, and it all just seemed like a surreal blur, but now, it was all flooding onto her.

She was alone.

Harry, Ron, and Hermione especially, all felt not only sympathetic but sad. They would miss their little sister. Harry, who had taken Ron’s position as youngest brother, was especially close to his only younger sibling, and he hugged her goodbye on the platform without feeling embarrassed or even twitching, like he sometimes did when anyone besides Molly hugged him. As close as he was to Remus and Sirius, he felt Molly was his savior, the first person he ever remembered caring about him enough to help him.

As he said goodbye to Sirius and Remus, Hermione hugged Ginny goodbye. Ginny hugged back, silent and somber.

“I’m so sorry, Ginny.” Hermione said. Ginny glared at her.

“I told you never to apologize to me, Hermione.” She said. Hermione blushed.

“Sorry.” She said, then caught herself. They both smiled. “I’ll miss you, Gin.”

"I'll miss you too, 'Mione." She nodded at Ron and Harry. "Keep an eye on those two idiots for me, all right?"

Hermione smiled and nodded. "I'll watch them like Molly."

"Not quite that close." Ginny said. "Just don't let them do anything stupid...I would tell you to keep an eye on Fred and George as well, but you do have to eat and sleep."

Hermione smiled again and jumped as the train whistle blew. Ginny said goodbye once more, Hermione hugged Molly goodbye, promised to be careful, and jumped on the train after Harry and Ron. Harry's owl, Hedwig, was hooting a soft goodbye to them. As soon as the train disappeared around the corner, Ginny fell against her mother's arm, sighing.

"I hate being the youngest."

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"Brothers, sister, we must warn you." The twins said together, pushing the three of them into a compartment. Fred smiled devilishly. "A prank will take place outside the next compartment."

"You might want to look innocent—"

"—or something of the sort—"

"—so you don't get in trouble." George winked. "We'd hate for you to have to take the blame for our devilish deed."

Hermione stared at them reproachfully. "You're going to get detention before the train even makes it to Hogwarts." She rebuked. "Can't you try to behave even for one moment just to take your schoolwork seriously?"

George turned to his twin. "Four years and we have no effect on her."

They walked out of the compartment, closing the door after them. Harry sat in his seat and thought about what he was leaving behind.

A family, friends, a home; things he had spent six years of his life without. Then he thought of what he might be leaving behind had Dumbledore never taken him from his aunt and uncle's home. He might not even be going to Hogwarts...

"Harry?" Ron's voice said. "Blimey, mate, you and Hermione both! What's up with you two?"

They both shrugged like it was nothing, but exchanged a "Harry/Hermione" look. It was something they were known for in the family, due to the fact that they were closer to each other than they were to any of the Weasleys. Harry disappeared back into his thoughts, thinking about what his name meant to the Wizarding world. To him, it meant nothing. It was just a name. No different than Ron Weasley or Remus Lupin. But to the Wizarding world, his name was different. His name had been on the lips of every witch and wizard in Britain. Harry Potter. Sirius Black. James Potter. Lily Potter. Peter Pettigrew. You-Know-Who. Everyone knew those names.

: Begin Flashback:

Harry was very excited. He would be getting all the basics to become a wizard today, as well as all his supplies for his first year at Hogwarts. Sirius and Remus had not only insisted to pay for Harry's things, but for Ron and Hermione's as well. Molly, Arthur, and Hermione had all refused many times, but the pair were relentless and demanded to pay for everything. When finally Harry heard the argument and stepped in as well, Molly and Arthur found themselves unable to rebuff their foster son. Though Hermione continued, they were paying for her things as well.

They Flooed to the Leaky Cauldron and went shopping around Diagon Alley. Ginny, sulking behind and wishing she was buying books and wands and potion supplies, was having trouble keeping up to the three excited eleven-year-olds who all wanted to go shopping. They made it through everywhere quite fine, with most people who had the chance taking a look at Harry's scar, but he was used to that. It was not until Sirius and Remus went to buy Harry an owl and left him with his foster parents that trouble ensued.

“Ah, Mr. Potter.” A shadowy voice said. “I was wondering when I would see you.”

“Sir?” Harry asked as the man the voice belonged to appeared.

“It seemed like just yesterday your parents were in here, buying their wands for Hogwarts.” The man said. Harry’s eyes lit up.

“You knew my parents, sir?” He asked. Even though he had numerous connections to his parents, he loved to meet anyone else who knew them.

“No, no...but I have sold a wand to just about every witch and wizard that lived in Britain in the past—it has gotten so long I can no longer count off the top of my head. Your parents were extraordinary people, Mr. Potter, in power and heart.” He looked into Harry’s eyes, and Harry deeply wished he would blink. The man’s silvery eyes were very spooky...and Harry didn’t like spooky. “You have her eyes, Mr. Potter.”

He looked up and saw, for what seemed like the first time, that there were other people in the room. “Molly and Arthur Weasley. Your wand was one of a kind, Mrs. Weasley. Twelve inches exactly, durable and stiff, oak, if I’m not mistaken, and a feather from a phoenix’s wing. Not a common place, but it favored you. It was great for Charms, if I’m right?”

Molly nodded, blushing slightly.

“I have never sold another wand like it, not even close to such a combination. And Mr. Weasley, your wand was mahogany. Fourteen inches, swishy, dragon heartstring core. Excellent for Transfiguration.” He said.

“Right-o, Mr. Ollivander.” Arthur said. Mr. Ollivander’s silvery eyes fell upon a new subject: Ginny.

“Who is this?”

“My name is Ginny, sir.” She said politely.

"You look exactly like your mother did when she came in here at age eleven." Mr. Ollivander informed her.

"Spiffing," Ginny said coolly, but all but Mr. Ollivander knew Ginny all too well to think that wasn't sarcasm. "but I'm ten."

"Oh?" Mr. Ollivander said, surprised.

"Hermione, Ron, and Harry are eleven." Ginny said, and then she repeated, "I am ten."

"Well," Mr. Ollivander continued. "Let us get wands for those who need them." Ginny narrowed her eyes. "Who's first?"

Hermione, who was falling back into the shadows all during the conversation and seemed to be getting the same impression of Mr. Ollivander that Harry had, stepped forward reluctantly. "I-I will." She choked out, and though it wasn't obvious to Mr. Ollivander, all the Weasleys knew that Hermione was very nervous and was trying her hardest not to talk, flashing back to the Sir and Ma'am Chronicles. Ginny took her sister's hand and led her forward toward the counter.

"Hold out your wand arm, please."

"What?" Hermione said, and Ginny smiled slightly.

"Your right arm, Hermione." Ginny said. Hermione blushed, feeling stupid, and held out her right arm, Ginny still holding her left hand. Though the latter tried to let go, the former would not release the death grip she had on her younger sister's hand. A measuring tape, which seemed to be moving on its own, measured some very strange measurements on Hermione before Mr. Ollivander held out a wand for her to try.

Hermione wrapped her hand around the wand, waved it, and.....(drum roll).....nothing happened. Pathetic.



It took four more pathetic wands until Hermione finally found one. Mr. Ollivander raised his head and looked directly at Harry. "Mr. Potter? You next?"

Harry nodded and took a few steps forward until he was where Hermione had been. Ginny was telling her how good she had done when all of a sudden Mr. Ollivander spoke in a hushed, even spookier voice. "That's where—" He began, leaning over Harry and pointing at his scar, but could not complete his sentence. He straightened and sighed. "I am sorry to say I sold the wand that did that. Yew, thirteen-and-a-half inches, with a phoenix tail feather core."

A cold feeling surged over Harry as Mr. Ollivander spoke of the wand. He was barely aware that he was being measured the same way Hermione had been. But when he started waving the wands, trying to get them to do things (he wasn't really sure what), he did notice that his pile was much heftier than Hermione's had been. Finally, Mr. Ollivander took a box from one of the shelves and began to analyze it, saying, "I wonder." He gave the wand to Harry. "Eleven inches, very nice and supple. An odd combination, though: holly and phoenix feather."

Harry took the wand and waved it once. The tip of the wand lit up and sparks flew out of it. Mr. Ollivander raised his eyebrows, nodding. "Curious. Very curious."

"I'm sorry, sir, but what's curious?" Harry asked.

"That wand, Mr. Potter, has a very rare trait with Ollivander wands. It has a brother. The phoenix that gave the feather in your wand gave one other; just one other." Mr. Ollivander blinked for the first time since they were in the shop. "It is odd that wand should choose you, Mr. Potter, because its brother...its brother gave you that scar."

Harry almost dropped his wand right there. He was barely aware of what was happening when Ron got his wand, and when Sirius and Remus came back with his owl and to pay for the three wands, and Molly told them what Mr. Ollivander had said, the only thing he remembered clearly was his godfather and Remus taking him for ice

cream and asking him if he wanted to talk about, a question to which his answer was no.

: End Flashback:

There was a loud noise outside the compartment, and Harry jumped all the way out of his seat. He opened the door and saw a boy that was very much older than him but that he did not recognize whose skin was orange and who had large boils on his face. People around them were laughing, but Harry, Ron, and Hermione were all gaping.

Fred and George did in fact get detention from the Head Girl before the school year even officially started.

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“Can’t I get five seconds of peace in this house?” Ginny groaned. “I thought having it emptier would make it easier to live in, but no! Now that’s it’s emptier you just bother me more! What, Mum, what? What could you possibly want now?”

“I know you’re upset because all your brothers and your sister are gone, Ginny, but—”

“No, you see, I’m more than upset. I was upset when they left. Now I’m annoyed out of my mind because I can’t get just one minute to myself. One hour, Mum, that’s all I’m asking. One hour a day, and for the rest of the day you can bother me all you please. Just one hour.”

“And you won’t complain?”

“Not any more than I have been.” She said.

“Fine,” Molly said. “you can have one hour a day. But it’s a—”

“Privilege, and if I misuse it or keep complaining you can take it away. You can do the same if you feel that at any time I no longer deserve the privilege. I am familiar with the rules, Mum, you have taken away many privileges from me in your days.”

“Like?”

“My no-bedtime privilege, my exploring privilege, and once you tried to take away my door, telling me that privacy was a privilege, until you realized that Hermione was sharing a room with me and had done nothing wrong, so you did not act. Then you warned me I was lucky and next time I would not be. Settled?”

“Yes.”

“So do I get my hour?”

“Yes,” Molly said. “But then we’re going to talk about this.”

“About what?”

Molly smiled. “The fact that now that Hermione’s gone you’re going to take every chance you have to fight with me.”

Ginny tilted her head. “Don’t count yourself so lucky, Mother.”

“Why are you like this, dear?”

“Like what, Mum?”

“You used to be so happy and carefree. You used to smile every second you had. I haven’t seen you crack a smile all day.”

Ginny stared into her mother’s eyes. “I’m older now, Mum. I’m not three. You can’t spell what you don’t want me to hear. You can’t say depressing things in happy voices so I can’t tell the difference. I’m smarter now, I understand what’s happening. I understand the real reason Hermione and Harry had to come here.”

Molly’s face fell. “I—I had this feeling, but...really, Ginny?”

Ginny nodded. “Have you ever been in a room with Hermione when she’s dreaming? It’s not exactly a sight to smile to. Horrible things happened to them, Mum, and I finally realize how horrible. Did you

ever even think about maybe why I don't fight with you around Hermione?"

"Because her parents used to fight?"

"Exactly." Ginny said. "And I don't want us to be like her parents. I want us to be her family. I want her to be happy and feel safe. We would never hurt each other. And I want her to know that. I want her to feel love. Because we love her, we love each other."

Molly stood there, shocked at her daughter's words.

"Now if I may have my hour."

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They were all waiting in a chamber for the Sorting ceremony to begin. The twins had tried to scare them with what might happen in the Sorting. Now, they were terrified. Specifically, Hermione, who would not speak to anyone in the room on the off-chance they were older than her, which was ridiculous, since she was most likely the oldest person in the room. Harry was trying to keep calm, but flinched at every sound.

This was not a good move when a boy with silvery-blond hair, cold, gray eyes, and a pale, pointed face came up in front of him. "So it's true then?"

Harry almost jumped out of his trainers. The boy cocked an eyebrow. "The Great Harry Potter has been living for the last four years with a bunch of blood-traitors who can't even afford shoes. Have they been using your money, Potter?"

Harry shook his head. "I like living with the Weasleys."

The boy snickered. "The Weasleys are dirt. I can show you more. Power. Value. Money. What do you say, Potter? I can show you the right way to go."

Harry twitched, but managed to hide it. "The Weasleys have already shown me the right way to go. I think I'll stick with them."

The boy narrowed his eyes. "You'll regret where you lay your loyalty, Potter." And he walked away. Harry followed him until he disappeared into the crowd of shaky eleven-year-olds and then started to hyperventilate, like he had wanted to do since the boy had approached him.

Ron had his hand on Harry's shoulder in a moment. "Calm down, mate, he's gone."

"Who was that kid?" Harry wheezed.

"Draco Malfoy. Son of Lucius Malfoy. Dad talks about him all the time."

Harry nodded. "I've heard."

A/n This was a shorter chapter, but it's something. Sorry, I have been so busy lately. I've been completely a bookcase full of homework each night, along with extra studying for all these placement tests I have to take before high school (plus the ice hockey practices and games I have three nights a week) while still trying to eat, sleep, and find the time to regularly update on all seven of my stories. At this point, I'm getting about five hours of sleep a night, and my hour-long nap that I used to take during history has turned into a study session, a homework catch-up, or a time to write down jumbled ideas on a memo pad and translate them into a chapter in my trusty spiral notebook. BUT I STILL LOVE YOU. Reviews will make me happy and less likely to bludgeon myself on the head with a brick out of stress.

P.S. --Hermione's parents will show up later. Promise.

Disclaimer! I AM NOT J.K. ROWLING! Please consult your physician if this is a surprise for you.

A/n Finally, after so long a wait, I am on SPRING BREAK! Two weeks of unadulterated freedom! Staying up till four in the morning and waking up at noon. Running and playing outside as much as I want. Writing as much as my fingers will let me. Hours of guitar playing. And most importantly: NO HOMEWORK!! POWER TO THE ADOLESCENTS!! Thank you for tolerating the waits while I do seventy problems of graphing quadratic equations (in a class most people take two years from now...I'm good at math?). Now I get to spend a BUNCH of time on this story. YES!!

“Abbott, Hannah!” McGonagall called. Naturally, with their many check-ups by the school matron, Hermione and Harry had already met the half the Hogwarts staff, and because of them, Ron had also met them all. But the rest of first years seemed positively petrified at the thought of all these witches and wizards—fully trained, mind you—that were going to find a way to Sort them into one of four Houses. “Abbott, Hannah” was shaking in her trainers after having been called first.

McGonagall put the Sorting Hat onto Hannah's head (which, incidentally, was also shaking like a streaker in Antarctica...without the deadness, though...), and it only took a minute before the hat's brim opened and it yelled, “HUFFLEPUFF!”

Hannah took the hat off her head, and the table on the inner left exploded with applause. “Bones, Susan” also went to Hufflepuff, but “Boot, Terry” became the first Ravenclaw. “Brown, Lavender” became the first Gryffindor, and “Bulstrode, Millicent” the first Slytherin. After that, Harry lost track. He would be the first of the three siblings to be called. Hermione had been adopted, but Harry remained still a foster child, and therefore, Potter would be the surname written on his tombstone. Hermione was trembling next to him. Ron was trying to keep his composure, if not for her than for the twins, who had told them all the only two things that would get them angry.

“We’ll admit we’re related to you forever and ever as long as you don’t break three simple rules: hate the Slytherins, don’t ruin our reputations, and hate the Slytherins.”

They added “don’t get Sorted into Slytherin,” but Molly had admonished them, telling the three eleven-year-olds that they would all be proud of them no matter what house they made it into. After the terrifying glare their mother gave them, the twins no longer brought up the Sorting, but continued on with the “hate the Slytherins.” When their mother tried to tell them off for that one, they blew the loophole horn.

“If they get Sorted into Slytherin, that’s fine. As long as they aren’t best mates with all of them. Remain true to yourselves. You aren’t like the Slytherins.”

Molly had turned around to find Ginny with a full plate and told her off for not eating, which distracted her from telling off the twins. Ginny often distracted her mother in order for her brothers to get away with something. She was too good at it, being the only one capable of withstanding the glare. In fact, she could glare back just as strong.

“Potter, Harry!” McGonagall called out. Harry took a deep breath, looked back at Ron and Hermione for a split second, and stepped forward as hushed whispers filled the hall. Students leaned forward in anticipation, and a few scooted back on the benches, as if making room for him there. The teachers at the staff table leaned forward slightly. Fred and George beamed proudly, and Percy tried to look important. Harry tried not to get uncomfortable; even after three years, he still was not at all used to the fame he got in the Wizarding world. Sometimes he wished his scar was gone.

He sat on the stool and placed the hat on his head. It was so big that it fell well past his eyes, and all he could see was the black fabric inside the hat.

“Interesting,” said a voice in his ear. “Very interesting indeed. There is a lot here, in your mind. A loyal person...plenty of brains...definitely brave, no doubt about that...You’re on the path to greatness, you know. But where to put you, where to put you...”

Not Slytherin, Harry thought desperately. Anywhere but Slytherin.

“Not Slytherin?” reiterated the voice, which Harry assumed was coming from the hat. “But Slytherin could do so much with a mind like yours. You would do well. Slytherin could lead you on the path to greatness.”

Not Slytherin. Please.

“No? Okay, then. Not Slytherin. But let’s see...where to place...better be...GRYFFINDOR!”

The Gryffindor table—on the far left—erupted into a pandemonium of applause and cheers. Harry grinned, took the hat off his head, and walked over to the table. The students were still cheering and clapping, some pounding on the tables and others whispering excitedly. He took a seat next to Fred and George, who both clapped him on the back.

“Congratulations, mate.” Fred said. “Now, we won’t get upset with you—”

“—and will admit you’re our foster brother.”

Harry smirked. “You know you would admit it if I were in any of the Houses. I’m Harry Potter.”

Fred and George looked at each other, triumphant grins on their faces. “Did he just—?”

“He did!”

“We’re very proud of you, brother.” Fred said. “You have made an egotistical comment. We have taught you all too well.”

They watched the Sorting, cheering and clapping as Gryffindors joined them. But they did not really pay attention until McGonagall reached a certain letter.



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Oh no. Hermione thought, terrified. She just skipped 'G'...am I not on the list? What if I'm not on the list? Oh no.

She looked down to the Gryffindor table at the Weasleys, who seemed to have not paid attention that they skipped her name. Then it occurred to her...Weasley...

And to think she was considered the smart one. She mentally slapped herself for being stupid enough to forget her own last name. It amazed her at how often that happened to her. She couldn't count how many times it had simply...slipped her mind that she was not a Granger anymore. It seemed so obvious once she remembered.

She grinned when Harry made it into Gryffindor. Now the twins would not be angry at him. It was obvious to her that she would not be in Slytherin; not only was she Muggle-born, but her adoptive family was notorious for being "blood-traitors." She knew Ron was freaking out about getting Sorted into Slytherin. It was stupid. The Weasleys had been in Gryffindor, according to Arthur, for several generations. And he was not exactly with the qualifications of a Slytherin. Ron still had no idea what he wanted to do with his life.

"Weasley, Hermione!"

The staff members at the High Table all smiled slightly, and McGonagall's smile was the last thing Hermione saw before putting on the hat. Apparently the Weasleys were not the only one who appreciated Hermione's name change. Hermione was very happy to have gotten this far that at this point she barely cared where she was placed. But still, she wanted to be with her brothers...Gryffindor sounded really good at that moment...

"Hmm." said a voice in her ear. She raised her eyebrows, fascinated by a new piece of magic she had not yet known about. Of course she knew she was Sorted by a hat. Molly had yelled at the twins for quite a long time for putting it in their heads that they had to fight trolls, and she told them it was just a hat and nothing more. But she had neglected to mention this hat could talk. "Interesting...A Muggle-born

who has been around magic for years. A unique case, I must admit. You certainly are intelligent, there's no doubt about that, you are brilliant. A lot of potential in this mind, and the ambition to carry it out. But your blood is not at all suited for Slytherin. Your loyalty toward those who show compassion to you is truly unmatched. And you are very brave. You are brave enough to face things you know nothing about, and you are brave enough to face things you know everything about, no matter what that knowledge tells you. There is only one place for all that.

“GRYFFINDOR!”

Hermione took the hat off, grinning, and saw Fred and George standing up and applauding, right next to Harry. Percy seemed a little more enthusiastic than he had been with the other Gryffindors, albeit, just a little—he still needed to show he was professional and deserved that prefect's badge. She walked to the Gryffindor table, finding herself being hugged, nervously and twitchily by Harry—an odd sort of thing for him, actually, but she mentioned nothing and assumed he was only at all comfortable because he was initiating the hug—and seated in between Fred and George. Harry also sat between them, though he was next to the latter and she next to the former. They turned to watch the rest of the Sorting.

“Weasley, Ronald!”

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Ron's knees were shaking as he watched Hermione's Sorting. He had always thought of himself as a Gryffindor. But still, he was nervous.

Oh, dear God why did his last name have to be Weasley? Why couldn't it be...Aweasley or something? There was only one other person still standing! He looked down at Fred and George, who had Harry squashed between them and were watching Hermione being Sorted.

The hat cried out for Hermione to forever be marked a Gryffindor. His name was next. Unless he had a long lost twin brother he had never

known about (and with his parents, who really knew) whose first name started with “H” through “Rn,” he had to be next.

“Weasley, Ronald!”

So the child was not related to him. That was a relief. In both that he did not have a long lost twin and that he was next to be Sorted. He walked toward the stood and placed the hat on his head, smiling at Harry and Hermione, who were seated at the Gryffindor table, both squashed between the twins. Though he wasn’t very good at showing it (he usually came about rather prat-like), he really cared for his brothers and sisters, especially those two. It meant a lot to him that he could even call those two his brother and his sister.

“Ah, this will be easy. You are brave, though you do not tend to show it on the outside. Loyalty is a very strong trait of yours...though your brain is not as large as some others, it is present and strong...yes, this will be very easy.

“GRYFFINDOR!”

Ron took the hat off his head, gave it to the boy who was still standing on stage, and walked over to the cheering, applauding Gryffindor table. He found himself clapped on the back by Fred, George, and Harry, embraced by Hermione, and given a firm handshake by Percy. “Zabini, Blaise” was put into Slytherin, marking the end of the Sorting. Dumbledore stood.

“Welcome! Welcome to a new year at Hogwarts. And before we begin our banquet, I would like to say a few words. And here they are: Nitwit! Blubber! Oddment! Tweak!

“Thank you!”

Had Harry not meant him before and known of his greatness, talent, and sanity, he would have been of the firm belief that his mind was somewhere on the floor of the ocean, lost forever and ever and ever. They applauded him, and food appeared instantly on the tables. Harry’s jaw dropped.

He loaded his plate with food, talking with his family and especially laughing with the twins. After his first bite he could not stop eating, marveling at the wonderful taste of the food. He had only tasted Hogwarts food on one other occasion, having that been also the first time he met Molly Weasley, and he was on the verge of being starved to death. At that point, it didn't matter what the food tasted like, so he didn't even notice.

XoXoX

"Well, well, Moony, it looks as though our legend lives on. Prongslet is officially a lion. The Sorting Hat decided only two hours ago that bravery—not intelligence, loyalty, or gitness—was the dominant trait of our dear Prongs, Jr. He has been Sorted into Gryffindor, and it shall stay that way forever and ever. Let the records show that Harry James Potter, son of Lily Evans-Potter and James Potter, godson of Sirius Black, is courageous above all else!"

Remus stared at Sirius, who was holding a scroll of parchment high above his head, his eyes closed, as though absorbing the moment, letting it permeate through his pores. He raised an eyebrow. "Are you quite done with the theatrics so we can write Harry and congratulate him?"

Sirius grinned and sat down at the kitchen table. His grin disappeared, however, when he stared back at Remus, and knew they were thinking the same thing. One of them had to ask the question, so Sirius did the honors. "What do you think Lily and James would say right now?"

"They'd be pretty damn proud of him, I know that much." Remus said. "Harry was their pride and joy. I-I'm glad you gave him the pin, Sirius. James would have wanted him to have it."

Sirius nodded. "I'm saving the other one though. If I knew Lily—which I think I did—she's going to want hers given to his true love. On his seventeenth, I think. The pin...and their rings."

Remus looked out the window. "I agree."

XoXoX

“We have three new Gryffindors, Arthur.” Molly smiled that night after having received an update letter from the twins, who had explained that they had stolen the privilege (and owl) from Percy to prove they were responsible.

“What would you do if I went to Slytherin?” Ginny asked conversationally, pushing around the food she still hadn’t eaten.

“We would love you all the same. It doesn’t matter what house you get Sorted into, Ginny. We love you, and nothing will change that.”

“Besides, you care too much about others to be in Slytherin.” Arthur said.

“Arthur!” Molly scolded, but she really didn’t mind too much, because it got a smile from Ginny.

Ginny nodded to the letter in Molly’s hand. “That wouldn’t happen to have any mention of a detention earned by my dear twin brothers, would it?”

“Just one detention.” Molly groaned. “Luckily they haven’t managed to cause too much trouble yet.”

Ginny grinned. “Or at least they haven’t gotten caught causing any trouble yet.”

XoXoX

“AGUAMENTI!” They screamed, pointing at the row of fireworks that was set up in the common room. Filibuster’s No Heat, Wet Start Fireworks, to be exact. And the two jets of water that were thrown toward them were just the push to set them off in a showy burst of sparks, amazing not only the “ickie firsties” but the veteran Hogwarts students.

Fred and George bowed and walked right past their older brother, who looked all prepared to give them seven years of detention for setting off fireworks in the Gryffindor common room. They walked straight over to their younger brothers and sister. Harry laughed and sat back in his chair. Ron grinned at his brothers' show, clapping along with a few other students. Hermione, smirking, complimented them on the spell. Spinning his wand idly in his fingers, Fred covered that one.

"No big deal, really. Aguamenti isn't as hard as it looks."

"No clue why they wait until sixth year to teach it in Charms."

"Definitely isn't N.E.W.T. level if we can do it."

"Could not agree at all more."

"Why'd you learn it if it was N.E.W.T level?" Harry asked. "The last time I checked, you were very lazy when it came to schoolwork."

Fred and George exchanged pitying looks. "Dear brother, if we didn't learn the Aguamenti charm, how else would we set off a whole box full of Filibuster's Fabulous No Heat, Wet Start fireworks to celebrate the arrival of our two brothers and our sister into the Gryffindor House?" George asked. Hermione laughed.

"It figures that pulling a prank or making a spectacle of yourself would be the only reason you two would overachieve."

Fred grinned. "Or achieve at all for that matter."

XoXoX

When Harry, Ron, and Hermione all woke up the next morning, they, like the rest of the population of first years in Hogwarts, were anxious to get their classes. They dressed in their Hogwarts robes quickly and rushed down to the Great Hall, where the twins had already begun to enjoy breakfast with Lee Jordan, a close friend of theirs (and by friend, I of course mean accomplice).

Having already met half their professors, they were not as nervous as some others were on that account. The Hogwarts professors seemed to have taken special interest in Harry Potter and Hermione Granger...and they had become friends once the latter was Hermione Weasley and the former had reunited with his godfather and with Remus.

Harry pinned his Marauder's pin to his robes and stared at it for a while. This was his father's. It meant more to him than anything he could think of at that moment. Even, though he would never admit this to anybody and sometimes regretted he thought this, having been taken away from the Dursleys and put with the Weasleys. If he had this pin with him, he could have probably lived all those years with the Dursleys. It gave him motivation to prove to everyone that he was worth something. It made him wonder whether his parents were proud of him, and it made him want to make them proud of him, no matter what the answer to that question was.

The post came no sooner than they had sat down. Hermes came swooping toward Percy, who gave the letter to Hermione. Sirius's owl, Explosion (don't ask, you'll regret it), landed next to Harry. Harry grinned and opened the first letter immediately, offering bread to Explosion.

Prongs Jr.,

We are very proud of you for getting into Gryffindor. Couldn't be happier. We know your parents would be very proud of you right now. They really wish they were here to see you go through Hogwarts, and we know you do too.

Keep us updated on your classes.

Love, Remus.

He opened the second letter, trying to keep his smile on since he was in front of people, but subconsciously twirled his pin.

Go Prongsie!

I am ecstatic to find out that you are braver than you are intelligent, loyal, or “ambitious.” You keep that way. Use that bravery for good. Mess with the twins a bit. You know you want to, mate. They can teach you well. I’ve already instructed them to do so. You should find yourself in the crash course sometime within your first week. I hope you find it informative.

Love,

Your accomplice/mentor/godfather, Sirius

Harry was right to open Remus’s letter before Sirius’s. He burst out laughing after reading it, and switched letters with Hermione and Ron, who had been reading Molly’s letter. Though Remus’s letter was hidden in his pocket, he gave them Sirius’s letter. He wanted to keep the words of Remus’s letter to his own. And Hermione and Ron—well, the former at least—knew and respected this.

Molly’s letter sounded rather like Molly, and she told them to tell off the twins for already getting detention. She also informed them that Ginny was already restless (“No surprises yet,” Hermione commented), but wished them all the best in their classes whilst wearing the first sincere smile she had since they had left. Ron was a bit skeptical of this, but Hermione and Harry, who knew Molly would never lie to them, were relieved to find out that she was happy for them.

McGonagall came down the row with their schedules. As she approached the twins, she notified them that their detention would take place that night with Filch. She congratulated them, also, on breaking the record for earliest detention in Hogwarts history. Their close second was due to the prank of Sirius Black and James Potter, which had taken place halfway through the train ride. She would not say what they did, though, so that the twins got no ideas.

“Hello, you three.” She said, nodding toward Harry, Ron and Hermione while giving them their schedules. “I will see you after lunch.”

And that she would.



Harry looked down at his schedule and realized that, of all the classes he was taking, History of Magic was his first class. Fred and George laughed at them for a good five minutes.

It turns out ghosts are not the best teachers.

“Who was it you pranked on the train anyway?” Harry asked, hoping to get them off the subject of their schedules.

“Marcus Flint.” Fred said proudly. “Captain of the Slytherin Quidditch Team.”

“A prat if I’ve ever seen one.” George sighed.

“He beat us last year and wouldn’t stop gloating. Wood was quite upset. So we turned him orange and gave him a few boils as payback.”

“We see nothing wrong.”

“Except that he is currently dating the Head Girl.”

“So we got busted.”

“Naturally.”

“A shame, too.”

“Well—”

“Enjoy your first class with Binns!” They grinned, walking out of the Great Hall.

A/n Yay! I will try to write this story as much as humanly possible. It is very relaxing writing about going to school and realizing you don’t have to.

Next chapter, expect a lot of things centering around activities in the Burrow.

I just wanted to wish a happy birthday to the Weasley twins (R.I.P. Fred Weasley). According to their canon birth dates, they are thirty years old today. So I added a few more twin scenes than I usually would. Hope they were worth it.

In case you forgot, I LOVE YOU ALL! COOKIES TO EVERYONE!  
SPRING BREAK IS EFFING AWESOME! WOOT!!

Disclaimer! I ain't J.K.R. My initials are A.G.E. Not very close.

A/n I love not being in school. I love that all the teachers at CMS hate us so much that they begged the school to give us two weeks off. I love you all. I'm just in love with everything now. Except this chapter. I hate what I'm doing in this chapter. But it's necessary to the story. So please, don't hate me like I currently hate myself.

"C'mon, Wood." Fred said. "We know good Seekers when we see them. Remember us?"

"Fred and George Weasley?"

"Brothers of the great Charlie Weasley?"

"The greatest Seeker to ever bless this school?"

"Well, George, don't get ahead of yourself."

"Oh?"

"Yes. The greatest Seeker to ever bless this school is currently walking the halls of this school unnoticed by the Captain of his House Quidditch team."

"Tragic."

"I do believe so."

They both looked to Wood, who had an eyebrow raised and his arms crossed over his chest. "First years haven't even had flying lessons yet. They aren't allowed brooms of they're own. How are we supposed to manage having a first year on our team if he can't have a broom?"

"Tomorrow night, be at the Quidditch pitch at seven." George ordered.

"We will show you how you are supposed to manage it." Fred said.

Wood looked between them, a skeptical, tenacious look on his face. "Fine. Seven tomorrow night. But if he's not there by seven-thirty, I'm leaving and won't even consider him."

He stalked off and the twins high-fived each other. "He's willing to wait a half hour for someone whose name he doesn't even know."

"He's desperate, Gred. I told you."

"Right you were, Forge."

XoXoX

"Ginny?" Molly called, and she stopped on the landing just in time to see Ginny's head popping out the door that led to the roof.

"My hour is starting...now." She went onto the roof, locked the door, and sat against the wall. She took a deep breath, grabbed a rock from the floor, and threw it as far as she could. That was, apparently, pretty damn far, because she could neither see nor hear the rock when it landed, just the small puff of dirt that it kicked up. Two weeks—almost three—and she was still pissed off. Before all her brothers and her sister were gone, Ginny never realized how boring the Burrow was. There was absolutely nothing to do.

Due to her mother's constant nagging, asking her why she was so sad, why she was so quiet, why she was this, why she was that, why she was breathing so hard, Ginny had managed to calm herself enough to appear content and managed to become rather passive. That cut down Molly's complaints to about a half of what she usually did. Of course, Molly was also noticing the change in Ginny, and now questioning her about that. It was annoying as it could get. She started asking what she was doing in the hour a day that Molly could not bother her during. Arthur stuck up for Ginny as best he could—he often joked that Ginny had a secret boyfriend she was visiting. Then when Molly chided him for saying that, Ginny would slip away.

Fred and George sent her updates of their detention schedules. They had recruited Harry under the recommendation of Sirius and Remus. His initiatory prank had apparently been successful. The twins

smuggled a salamander from Care of Magical Creatures. Harry hid it in the Slytherins' food and hid around the corner. He threw a firework at the table, which set off and became a floating bonfire right above the table. The salamander jumped into it, scaring the Slytherins and making them unwilling to eat the mashed potatoes, not to mention the fact that when the bonfire went out, the salamander landed on one of their heads. Harry had snuck in, and he managed not to get caught. The twins, however, were caught and given detention.

She had to applaud them; it was a very good prank that took a lot of risk and preparation. There were a thousand ways it could have gone wrong but they ignored every one.

Her watch went off. The hour was up. She had to face her mother.

As she stood up, she noticed a tawny owl flying toward her. It gave her a letter and then flew off in the same direction it came. There was something strange about this letter. Something very strange indeed.

It had a stamp on it.

XoXoX

It sometimes took ten to twenty minutes for the stuttering Professor Quirrel to make it through the register. This particular day was the worst so far. By the time he got to "W-W-W-We-We-Weas-W-Weasl-Weasl-Weasley, R-R-Ro-R-Ron-Ron-Ronal-Ronald," Ron was already asleep. Hermione nudged him just in time before the professor looked up and saw, and Ron was able to declare his presence without having been caught.

The rest of the class was taken up by Quirrel stuttering out the average scores for the essays and explaining how his grading system worked, this being the first assignment they had gotten back with a grade on it. He walked around the class, returning the essays to them. Hermione, to little their care, had gotten the highest grade of the three, closely followed by Harry. Ron, however, had gotten what he perceived to be the worst grade in the class.

"How'd you manage that, Ron?" Harry asked. "We were helping you."

Ron shrugged and was the first one out the door when the bell rang, even though they were seated in the middle of the classroom. Harry and Hermione exchanged one of their signature looks and followed him. He was leaning against the wall, with an expression so annoyed an outsider would think he had been waiting upwards of six hours for them to emerge from the classroom. They all walked together to Charms, talking idly.

“Do either of you get a feeling like something is happening at home that we don’t know about?” Hermione asked quietly. Harry and Ron both looked at her like she was asking if they had ever seen a moose climbing a tree.

“Where do you get that idea?” Harry asked.

“Well, Molly has seemed rather...evasive in her letters, and we haven’t had any word from Ginny. Do you think she’s all right?”

“Why would she not be?” Harry asked. “And better yet, why would Molly not tell us if there was something wrong with our sister?”

“Molly always worries about getting us scared for naught.”

“Speaking of getting scared for naught.” Harry said. “You’re just paranoid, ‘Mione. Ginny’s fine. She’s probably just fighting with Molly and doesn’t want to tell you.”

“Why wouldn’t she tell me?” Hermione asked.

Ron laughed. “You’re clueless for the smartest of us. Ginny always fights with Mum. She just never does around you so that you aren’t reminded of your biological parents. You’re the only thing that shuts Ginny up.”

XoXoX

“Mum?” Ginny yelled, walking back into the house. “Mum, you’ve got a letter!”

“Who’s it from?” Molly asked.

“I don’t know.” Ginny answered. “It has a stamp on it.”

Molly was silent for a moment. “Well maybe it was mixed up in the Muggle post. Open it and see what it is.”

Ginny opened the envelope and removed the carefully folded letter. She scanned over it, thinking it was nothing. But when she caught the true meaning of the words, her heart, stomach, and face all raced to the core of the earth. It was a mystery who won, because Ginny was halfway down the stairs by the time they had reached the mantle. She called her mother’s name a thousand times, panicking, scared like she had not been for years. She suddenly thought of her talk with Judge Whitley four years ago and ran only faster. She remembered what Hermione had been like during the Sir and Ma’am Chronicles and yelled only louder.

She crashed into Molly on the second landing. The latter looked at her daughter, very concerned for her mental health, and helped her stand back up.

“What’s going on, Ginny?”

Ginny held the letter up for Molly to read, blinking back tears that wanted to fall down her face. When Molly read the letter, however, she did not bother to blink back the tears. She let them fall down her face, but nonetheless put her hands on Ginny’s shoulders.

“Nothing will happen.”

“How can you promise that, Mum?”

“Hermione is at Hogwarts now; her parents cannot get to her. And even if she was here, I would never let Hermione out of my sight, none of us would.”

“Mum, they’re after her! They want her back, they could hurt her! What are we going to do?” Ginny asked frantically. Molly smiled, but

Ginny saw in her eyes that she too was terrified of the statements Ginny had just made.

“Ginny, Hermione will not be hurt at Hogwarts.”

“Well are we going to tell anyone about this? Dumbledore?”

Molly shook her head. “Dumbledore has bigger things to worry about, and he’s already taking precautions against this. Muggles can’t get into the school.”

“Judge Whitley?”

“She can’t do anything about this. It’s not her case anymore.”

“Hermione?”

Molly sighed. “I really don’t think we should get Hermione worked up about this. Of course they are her biological parents, but she has a tendency to overexaggerate and worry too much over nothing. And that’s what this is. Nothing.”

“Howcanyoucallthisnothing?!” Ginny shouted. “This is serious!”

“They can’t get to her, Ginny!”

“It doesn’t matter that they can’t get to her! They’re still trying to reach her and it should not be your decision whether or not she knows about it!”

“I’m her mother!”

“And I’m her sister!” Ginny screamed. “She tells me things that she would never confide in her mother! She has told me things about those monsters that would make you want to lock her in a Fidelius Charm until they’re dead!”

She turned and walked away, but Molly grabbed the back of her shirt. “And what ‘things’ would those be?”



Ginny shook her head. "Hermione told me them in confidence. If she wanted you to know, she would have told you herself. For all you know, maybe she did. We can't be sure unless I tell. But Hermione told me not to tell a soul and I am going to honor and respect that wish." She took the letter. "We're sending this to Dumbledore and Hermione. I don't care what you say. I don't care if I have to sneak a copy of this letter to Hermione, she will find out that her parents are trying to regain custody of her."

XoXoX

"Fred, George, what are you doing?" Harry asked when the twins grabbed him and lifted him from the ground by his arms. "Put me down." He said calmly, as if he didn't give a damn he was a foot and a half off the ground.

"No. We're going to take you to Wood."

"What's Wood?" Harry asked, still very mundanely.

"The more appropriate question," Fred began.

"Would be: who is Wood." George finished.

"Though I suppose when he's very angry during a practice he can become a 'what.'" Fred said. "You see, young brother, the Gryffindor Quidditch team is lacking a Seeker this year. Our Captain, Oliver Wood, is getting desperate. So—"

"I'm a first year." Harry said, now sounding a bit exasperated. "I can't have a broom of my own."

"McGonagall has a soft spot for the Quidditch team. She'll bend a rule if need be."

"So," Harry drawled. "let me get this straight. You want me, a scrawny, ickle little firsty, to become the Seeker for the Gryffindor Quidditch team, even though you've only seen me fly in the orchard at the Burrow while Ginny throws apples into the air?"

“Her aim has gotten better over the years!” George said, as if that covered for the rest of it.

“Besides, you’re better than Charlie, he even said it himself before he ran off to Romania. Wood will eat you up.”

Harry rolled his eyes and accepted the broom that was being shoved at him. Sirius and Remus had bought him a Nimbus 2001 as an eleventh birthday gift, even though he couldn’t use it until second year (or so they thought), but that was not the broom the twins gave him. The broom the twins gave him had splinters sticking out every which way and bristles bent and twisted and broken. He looked at them like they were asking him to make a rock do backflips with the magic of persuasion rather than a wand.

“You expect me to ride this thing and make the Quidditch team?”

“If you can do well on this broom,” George said.

“Wood will know we’ve been serious.” Fred said.

George nodded in agreement.

“Apparently,” Fred said. “We have a tendency to...goof around?” He looked to George, as if imploring for help on solving the riddle as to how anyone could think they “goof around.”

“Just because we take the mickey out of him every day.” George shrugged. Harry shook his head.

“Fine.” He said. “But if I end up with a million splinters in my arse I’m blaming it on you two.”

He mounted the broom and kicked off from the ground, flying high above them and into what he assumed to be the Quidditch pitch. They ran after him, grinning at each other. When they found Wood was not there yet, they asked him to do these ridiculous things to test out the broom. They asked him to do loops, dives, and sudden turns. He almost crashed after diving too far on the broom, but managed to pull up just in time and level himself.

Apparently, Wood had been watching about three-quarters of the test ride, and when he came down from the bleachers, he clapped the twins on the backs.

"We haven't seen a Seeker this good since Charlie Weasley." He said. "What broom is he using?"

Fred whistled and Harry flew down. "Harry, this is Oliver Wood. Show him the broom we gave you."

Harry nodded and held out the broom. Wood raised an eyebrow and turned to the twins.

"Are you two mental? He could have killed himself on this broom! How did you even get this? The school locked it away years ago!"

The twins grinned deviously. "We weren't afraid he'd kill himself."

"Harry's too bloody good at flying to kill himself on any broom."

Harry was looking at the ground, trying to look unfazed by their conversation about him. He hated when people talked about him, especially when it was compliments. Even after so long, he was not used to people liking him or complimenting him.

"So, what do you think, Wood?" Fred asked.

"He managed not to kill himself on this broom." George reminded him.

"Even Charlie couldn't do that."

"He's a first year!" Wood exclaimed.

"He's the best Seeker in the whole school!"

Wood groaned. "McGonagall won't let us make an exception for this."

"Try, Wood." Fred said.

“You will be pleasantly surprised.” George conceded.

Wood shook his head and walked past the twins to Harry, who still had his head down. “You are the best Seeker I’ve ever seen. I will try my hardest to get McGonagall to consider it.”

Harry lifted his head, smiling. Wood’s eyes widened as they fell on the lightning bolt scar. “HARRY POTTER?” He roared, turning on the twins. “I just tried out Harry Potter and you two didn’t tell me!”

Fred, grinning, said, “Now, now, we couldn’t have you just trying him out for his fame, could we?”

XoXoX

“Ginny Weasley!” Molly screamed, knocking on the door. Ginny did not answer. “Ginevra, open this door right now!” She did not. Molly turned the knob for herself and found it locked. She unlocked it with her wand, but still found herself unable to get past it. “GINEVRA WEASLEY, DID YOU BARRICADE THIS DOOR?!”

She heard her daughter laughing inside. “Yeah...”

“Unlock it RIGHT now!” Molly ordered.

“I don’t think I will.”

“Ginevra Molly Weasley, if you don’t open this door right now, there will be serious consequences!”

“Will there?” Ginny said lightly. “Like, so speaking, there will be if the proper protection isn’t placed around Hermione?”

“She is safe at Hogwarts, Ginevra, there is not a safer place!”

“Professor Dumbledore didn’t realize Hermione was getting abused for nearly eight years, how do you know he’s taking precautions now?”

“I trust Dumbledore!”

“Usually, I would too!” Ginny yelled. “But how can he protect against something if he hasn’t a clue if it’s going to happen?”

“Ginevra Molly Weasley, open this door right now!” Molly demanded. Ginny did nothing of the sort. She sighed. “I didn’t want to have to do this.”

“If you’re planning on blasting the door open, feel free, but you do realize that I’ll have to come out eventually, and that by that time I will have cooled off enough to perhaps have civilized conversation with you that will involve little screaming. So if you really want to talk to me right now, when I’m so upset I’ve blockaded my door with my wardrobe and my desk, then I suggest that you blow open the door right now. But if you don’t want to be temporarily deaf for the next three days, I suggest you wait a while and just leave me alone so I can think about this.”

“I really want to talk to you about this.”

“And I really want Hermione to know about this! Maybe she wants to see them again. Maybe she wants closure.”

“Where did you get that idea?”

“From her telling me that she wants closure.”

XoXoX

“Potter!” A voice came from the hall. Harry turned around and saw Wood squeezing through the crowd to get to him. It was barely difficult, for Wood’s burly build and wide shoulders parted the crowd easily. “Potter!”

“Yes, sir?” Harry asked out of habit, and Wood gave him a strange look for a moment before dropping the subject and going on with what he would have said.

“McGonagall is letting you on the team! I don’t know when you have Transfiguration, but she’s going to talk to you about your broom situation then.”

“I-I have Transfiguration next, sir.” Harry said quietly.

Wood raised an eyebrow. “What’s with the—”

“Habit from early childhood.” Harry said, out of habit from recent childhood. “So you really want me on the team?”

That strange look came back even stranger. He looked at him like he was just slapped across the face with a headless chicken. “You’re the best Seeker in the school! This is the twins’ only chance to hear me saying they were right!”

“Thank you.” Harry mumbled.

XoXoX

Ginny sat on the fence in front of the property, kicking dirt in the road to the village. It was well past her bedtime and she had snuck out to the fence,—another thinking spot of hers— leaving a note on her pillow so her mother didn’t worry. She just needed to see the moon and the endless plain of stars. It gave her hope when she was sad. She wondered sometimes what it was like on those stars.

There was a speck in the sky. Unlike the stars, it was dark. It was moving. It was moving toward her. Getting bigger, and bigger, and bigger.

She barely noticed the owl until it was right in her face. It dropped another stamped letter on her lap and flew away, making a U-turn and flying back the way it came without a glance behind it. Ginny took the letter and sighed. She opened it and read the message. It was the same handwriting as the last one.

We know she is there. We will be there soon. You can’t hide her. We know she is there.

No salutation, no signature. Very blunt. Very repetitive. It could only be from one place.

As she tore up the letter, she let her tears fall from her face. Everything felt so strange lately. She felt abandoned. Her bedroom felt so empty. The house felt so still. The kitchen table felt so deserted. For her whole life she had been around siblings. It just didn't feel the same with only two parents. And on top of that, her father was gone all day, leaving her all alone with her...mother.

It was enough to shudder at the mere thought of it.

With a sigh, she stood and took a final look at the night sky before turning around. She had gotten off on the road side of the fence, and though she could have easily jumped the low wooden fence, as it only came to her waist, she walked around to the gate.

She heard something coming and turned. She saw nothing but a large shadow. There were no lights on the road, so the moon was the only source of light. But as she turned back again, she heard the kicking up of dirt. Thinking it must just be some animal, she kept walking.

XoXoX

"Arthur? Did you see Ginny on your way in?" Molly asked, sounding very worried but also sounding like she was masking it.

"No. Why?"

"She's not in bed. And the clock says...m-m-m-m-mortal p-peril...ARTHUR!" She screeched. Arthur stood and put his hands on Molly's shoulders.

"There is a reason behind this. I am sure Ginny is fine."

Molly nodded, unshed tears in her eyes. She lit her wand and went outside. "Ginny! Ginny?!"

"Molly—you should come here, Molly."

She turned to see Arthur standing at the gate of their fence. It was open wide, and he had something in between his fingers that his wand was pointed at. She sprinted over like she had never run before, and took the paper from his hand. Putting her wand over it, she burst into tears and fell into Arthur's arms as soon as she read the words.

You took our daughter, we take yours.

A/n What a twist. I will comment no further.

Spring break is over on Monday. Which means I go back to an annoyingly full schedule. I have the next five chapters drafted, they just need to be edited and fixed to my liking. Thank you for staying with me through all this.



Disclaimer! I'm not Jo. I wish I was, but I'm not.

A/n I am AMAZED that you like this story so much. Thank you so much. I'm back in school now, and getting all this crap about my accent. I used to have this heavy Chicago accent, even though I moved to southern California a few years ago, but I've gotten so sick of all these people making fun of my accent and asking me why I have it that I taught myself to talk with the accent less often. I still have the accent when I get nervous, angry, tired, or excited. And now, they ask me why I got rid of it. So I just said screw it and my accent is back.

And after that useless anecdote that you probably didn't even care about, here is the next chapter of "The Sir and Ma'am Chronicles."

"Arthur, what are we supposed to do? She's—" Molly was too hysterical with tears to finish a sentence. She buried her face into Arthur's chest.

"We're going to tell Dumbledore right now, okay?" Arthur said, trying to be reasonable. "Try to stay calm."

"I CAN'T STAY CALM, ARTHUR, OUR DAUGHTER IS THE HANDS OF TWO CHILD ABUSERS!" She bellowed. "WHO KNOWS WHAT THEY COULD DO TO HER?!"

"She has told me things about those monsters that would make you want to lock her in a Fidelius Charm until they're dead!"

XoXoX

Ginny woke up with a horrible pain in her head, like someone had bludgeoned her with something very heavy. But better than that, she was in a dark room she had no memory of, with no clue how it was she got there. It took a minute for her eyes to adjust to the darkness, and when it did, she saw a door across from her. She walked across and tried to open it, but it was locked.

"Hello?" She said. Her voice came out slurred and small. But she must have been heard, because the door opened and a light turned

on. Ginny's eyes went out of whack at the sudden shift, but adjusted to find a man and a woman standing in front of the door. They looked very familiar, except that they had aged several years and looked thinner and more dangerous and sadistic. Ginny backed up against the wall.

"You." She gasped.

"Where's our daughter?" Mrs. Granger asked.

"She's not your daughter."

Mr. Granger slapped Ginny into the wall behind her. She felt blood trickle down her neck but made nothing of it. "We'll ask again. Where is our daughter?"

"She's not your daughter." Ginny reiterated. "She's a Weasley now."

They both kicked her in the stomach, and her head again hit the wall behind her, along with her back. She felt blood in her mouth, but swallowed it.

"Where is she?"

"Sod off!"

"You little bitch!" Mr. Granger roared, taking the front of her shirt and throwing her against the wall. "Where is she?"

Ginny used some of the words that the twins had gotten yelled at for days for using. And her mother said she'd never need to know those words.

But they just made her get more beat up. By the time they gave up, she was bleeding more than she could ever remember having bled and had several broken bones. They turned the light out and she was in darkness again. That's when she allowed herself to cough up the blood that was swimming in her mouth. She did so silently, letting it flow out of her mouth, over her chin. With her shirt, she wiped off the excess blood and sat up against the wall. No way was she sleeping.

She would not sleep after she heard what those monsters had done to Hermione.

XoXoX

Harry brought his Nimbus 2000 up to his dormitory, careful not to let anyone see it. He was supposed to be the 'secret weapon' of the Quidditch team, and letting anyone know he was would be a big mistake on his part. Therefore, he could not even let anyone see his broom.

Ron, of course, knew about this and couldn't be happier. He couldn't wait for an excuse to sneak out and fly Harry's broom. But Wood had other plans for that broom. Harry would be the only one on that broom for the rest of its life. Wood personally made sure that Harry ate a sufficient amount every meal, and also made sure he completed his homework each night so as not to get detention from any teachers and miss a practice or—even worse—the game.

The first game would take place in a month and half. Gryffindor hadn't won the House Cup since Charlie Weasley was Seeker, but based on this team, Wood said, they would win with no Chasers.

Praise from the whole team came to the twins. It was strange for them, being praised for something while people were nodding as opposed to laughing. Though, they welcomed any praise.

Harry, however, blushed and faltered still under the thankful eyes of the team. He often found himself staring at his shoes, silent and wide-eyed. His teammates would simply laugh and tell him thanks one more time. McGonagall seemed oddly nicer to him since he was on the team. It was usual for her to be a bit easier on him and Hermione, given her knowledge of their situations, but he got this strange vibe it was even more so now that he was the "star Seeker."

Meanwhile, Hermione was secretly having the worst problems adjusting to the change. She could never get used to the freedom of Hogwarts, or the size. She could never get used to being without Ginny. Every night, she wanted to say goodnight to Ginny, but instead said goodnight to four giggling, gossiping girls that never

responded. Hermione wasn't interested in other people's personal lives. So naturally, she did not fit in with the other girls at the school and simply stayed with her siblings, knowing that Ginny would be present soon enough. Oh how she missed her sister.

But most of all, Hermione could never get used to being a Weasley. Every day during register she had a piercing, terrifying thought because the teacher had skipped her name, Granger. Then she remembered that she was Weasley, usually after "Thomas, Dean," but every once in a while after "Turpin, Lisa."

And she still had the aching feeling that something was happening she didn't know about. Maybe it was separation anxiety, or maybe she was just freaked out because her parents were on the loose, but she was more frightened than she had ever been that something bad was going to happen while she was at Hogwarts. Something horrifying. And even worse, she had a feeling nothing she could do would stop it.

XoXoX

"The Ministry of Magic as well as the Muggle government has been alerted of the kidnapping, Molly." Dumbledore assured her. "Their minds were Obliviated of all knowledge to the magic world."

"Why weren't their minds Obliviated of us?" Arthur asked.

Dumbledore shrugged, unable to answer the question. "Let me assure you Ginny will come back to you safe. I will make it a priority."

With that, he left, and Molly burst into tears. Arthur, quite used to this at that point, held her tightly, her body flush against his.

"Arthur this is all my fault! She tried to convince me to tell someone, but I didn't do anything!" Molly sobbed.

"It is not your fault, love. You had no clue what measures they would go to. This—this is just sick. They're sick people."

“And our daughter is with them! Who knows what they could be doing to her!”

“Gin’s a tough girl. She can handle it.”

“She could be dead already!”

When her knees began to fail her, Arthur picked her up and carried her to the couch, dropping her down. He kneeled in front of her, put his hand over hers, and looked her in the eye, his expression stiff and determined. “Ginny is the smartest, most resourceful one of our children. She learned from only the best. She learned from generations of Gryffindors. From Bill, she got logic. From Charlie she got strength, emotional and physical. From Percy, she got logic, and lots of it. From the twins, she got wit. She can pull anything out of her arse because of those two. And from all those games of chess with Ron, she learned strategy. But most important, she learned from you how to be the most stubborn person on the face of this fine planet. And from what she’s heard about what they did to Hermione, she’ll use all she can to give them back what they gave to Hermione.”

Molly kept crying.

“If anything, Molly,” Arthur said quietly. “I would be more worried if any of our other children got kidnapped by those monsters at her age than I am right now about Ginny. Something just tells me that she will hold out better than any of our other children. Do you feel the same way?”

She sniffled. “A little.”

“Try to get some rest.”

“Should we tell her?”

Arthur stopped. “I think we should.”

Molly conceded, telling him she would write the letter before getting to bed. They had been sleepless for the last twenty-six hours of straight questioning and answering and preparation for the lawsuit.

Arthur fell onto the couch, taking his glasses off to allow himself to rub his face without intrusion. He had left out one thing about the situation that he knew Molly didn't want or need to know. Even if Ginny would be the best during, she would be the worst after. She had a tendency to seclude herself and change ninety percent after a traumatic event.

He decided, after a few moments to allow her to write the letter, that he would join his wife for her nap. As soon as he walked into the hallway and got within feet of the door, he heard her sobs. With a sigh, he walked in to find her wailing into the pillow, however it was muffled by it. He lay down next to her and put his arms around her. She melted into it, unable to calm herself. Arthur didn't waste his time trying to calm her down.

Eventually, they ended up falling asleep like that, in each other's arms, tear tracks on both their faces, and Arthur's shirt rather damp.

XoXoX

"September 30th. It's only been a month." Harry sighed. Hermione put a hand on his shoulder.

"And quite a month it has been, Harry." Hermione said quietly. Already they had interesting experiences at Hogwarts, including accidentally finding themselves in the third floor corridor, where a three-headed dog was guarding something over a trapdoor. The room was not located on the Marauder's Map.

"That it has, sis." Harry whispered, and it was barely audible over the rushing of owls that came into the Hall. The owl Harry had bought the Weasleys as a general 'thank you' was heading toward them. Errol was getting too old, so they saved him for shorter distances. Twist was the main owl. He was named for the book Hermione was reading when they got the owl, *Oliver Twist*. Fred and George laughed so hard upon hearing this name—no one quite knew why—that they started calling the owl 'Twist.' Of course, it stuck.

“Hey, Twist, what do you have for us today?” Hermione asked the owl, taking the letter from his leg and giving him some bread. He nipped her ear lovingly and was off. Hermione frowned at the scroll.

“What’s wrong, Hermione?” Ron asked.

“Is this Molly’s handwriting?” Hermione inquired softly so they were not overheard. Harry looked at it and raised an eyebrow.

“It looks like it. But sloppier.”

Hermione shook her head. “It looks like she was shaking when she wrote it.”

Silence struck between the trio. “Maybe she was excited.”

Harry and Hermione looked at Ron for only a split second before he looked at his plate and kept eating. Hermione sighed, unraveled the scroll, and read it. As her eyes traveled over it again and again and again (Harry noticed she was reading it many times), her breathing got faster and faster and her hands started to shake and she was shaking her head. After reading it upwards of ten times, she dropped it over her food and rushed out of the Great Hall.

The boys grabbed the letter and read it without a look at where Hermione was going. Fred and George walked over just as Harry and Ron gasped. They shoved the letter into the twins’ hands and raced after Hermione. The whole Hall was staring at them, but they didn’t give a damn. Even after their turn reading the letter, the twins went after them, pushing the letter into Percy’s hands.

XoXoX

“Hermione!” Harry yelled. “Hermione! Where are you? Hermione!”

Lavender Brown came up behind them. “I saw her go into the girl’s lavatory.”

“Which one?”

She made a face. "Moaning Myrtle's."

The boys had no clue what she was talking about. "Can you get her for us?"

"I'm not going in there!" She said, turning on heel and walking into the Great Hall.

"Wait!" Harry said. "Where is it?"

Lavender told them the way, and the boys went shooting off, hearing Fred and George following along in their wake. They went to Moaning Myrtle's bathroom, as Lavender had called it, and knocked on the door a few times.

"Go away!" Hermione's voice came.

"Hermione, please!" Ron said. "She's our sister too!"

"But they aren't your parents! It's not your fault she's with them!"

"It's not your fault either, Hermione!" Fred's voice said. Hermione opened the door.

"Fred, George, what are you two doing here?"

"You're our sister." George said.

"We knew you'd react like this." Fred finished. "Now would you stop blaming yourself so we can figure out how to get our sister back?"

Hermione looked up at all of them and burst into tears, her legs failing to hold her up. Harry put his hands on her waist and tried to keep her up, but she was also sobbing so hard she kept shaking out of his grasp. Ron ended up supporting her shoulders along with Harry's support.

"They'll kill her! They're going to kill her and it's all my fault!" Hermione wailed. And those were turned into coherent words from the jumbled mess of: "Dale yill lir! Dare yonna yill lir am iz ol mifilt!"



“For godsakes, go get Professor McGonagall!” Harry shouted to the twins. They raced off, so concerned for their sisters that they had no time to contemplate the turn of events in which they were going to get McGonagall to deal with Hermione, rather than Hermione getting McGonagall to deal with them.

They returned with McGonagall in only a few moments, and Hermione was still hysterical. She was taken to the hospital wing and given the strongest Calming and Sleeping Draughts they could find. Within seconds she was unconscious, and the four boys fell into chairs or onto other beds, letting out long, loud sighs. Ron stood up shortly after sitting down and kicked over the chair he had been sitting in. Fred and George were so filled with negative emotion at the moment that they had no time to think of jokes, let alone verbalize one. So naturally, no one even bothered to tell the joke: “Blimey Ron, the chair might be uncomfortable, but there’s no need to injure it.”

All of them felt unshed tears in their eyes as they watched Hermione lying there. They all knew what she had been through. And they all knew that the Grangers were mental. Mental, sadistic, cold-hearted bastards that beat the living shit out of their biological daughter. Who knows what they would do to a kid that wasn’t even theirs. And better yet, what they would do to the kid of the people who “took” their daughter and landed them in jail.

Hermione might be right.

They might kill Ginny.

“Will you four need the same?” The matron asked them. They shook their heads solemnly and silently. Harry covered his face with his hands. Out of all of the conscious people in that room, he probably knew the best of them all what might happen to Ginny.

George shook his head. “What do you think is going to happen to her, Harry? W-What will those—those creatures do to her?”

Harry shrugged. “If they’re anything like they were from the stories Hermione told me, they won’t feed her. They’ll keep her locked up

somewhere, probably only come in to beat her up, maybe ask about Hermione. But they'll be secret about it. They'll put her someplace where you don't expect it. Somewhere that seems really hard to get to."

"Like where?" Ron asked

"It definitely won't be in their house, unless they have a secret room. It might be at an abandoned building somewhere. They definitely won't let her know where she is." Harry shook his head. "But look, I know Ginny. We know Ginny. She is going to come out of this alive."

Fred stood. "I know she'll be alive!" He grunted. "But is she going to look at all like you did when you walked into this hospital wing four years ago? Will she look anything like Hermione did? Worse, maybe? What are they going to do to my baby sister?!"

He punched a pillow and fell onto a bed, his face in the sheets. Madam Pomphrey sighed and gave him a powerful Calming Draught too. Just to be safe, she ordered the rest of them to take them and to take it easy, which meant no classes for the day. It showed just how upset they were that no celebratory actions took place after this announcement.

They were given beds in the hospital wing, and they all ended up staring at each other, waiting until Hermione woke up to come up with any plan. Though she might be the most panic-stricken, she would be of good use to them. She knew her parents the best out of them, and she would think most logically. They hoped the Calming Draught would stick after her sleep, so that logic reigned over panic. They didn't say a word until Fred suddenly jumped up and pulled something out of his bag, which was on the side table.

"Fred?" Ron asked.

"I can't just sit here, Ron! Merlin, it's killing me! I have to do something, Ron, anything!" He grabbed a quill and a piece of parchment.

"What are you going to do?" Harry asked.

"I'm just going to write Mum! Tell her we got the letter and explain everything with Hermione and everyone! I can't—she's going to be worrying about us." He said. They all knew it was his Calming Draught wearing off. There was always a small relapse of anger after taking it, but then he would be perfectly calm again, back into his old self.

XoXoX

Ginny stopped his arm. She stopped it.

But he had another.

Her right arm was dripping with blood, since they had stabbed it with a knife, and she couldn't move it. He punched her and wrenched his other arm loose, so he could beat her up more. It was with this arm that he grabbed her throat and lifted her against the wall. She did not yell or cry. She did not grunt or groan. She simply allowed it. Then she kicked him in the stomach. He rammed her against the wall and dropped her, calling her obscene names, some of which she hadn't even heard from her brothers.

"You're only alive because we want our daughter back."

"At this rate the only thing you'll get back is your jail cell." Ginny breathed. "With my testimony, and with how I look, you're never going to see light again, let alone Hermione."

"Who said you'd be in the shape to give a testimony?" He leaned next to Ginny. "If we don't see our daughter, you don't see your family. Understand me?"

"YOU BASTARD!" Ginny roared, kicking him hard in the stomach. He cringed and slammed her head against the wall.

"I hope your many brothers enjoyed having sisters."

XoXoX

When Hermione finally woke up, she discovered that the twins, Ron, and Harry were all in beds, staring at each other. She sat up and looked around at them.

“What’s going on? Are you four okay?” She rubbed her head. “How long has it been?”

“It’s around dinner right now.” Harry said.

“Where’s Percy?” Hermione asked.

“He came in a while ago.” Ron said. “Even if he tried to hide it, he was worried. He’ll be handing out detentions like mad till—” He couldn’t finish.

Hermione shook her head. “What are we going to do?”

“We have to help.” Harry said. “Hermione—I really don’t want to do this to you, but—”

“I’m going to turn myself over to them.” She blurted. They all looked at her with wide eyes, shaking their heads.

“Hermione, you can’t!”

“I don’t want Ginny suffering because of me! They could kill her, and I don’t want you to lose a sister because of my parents!”

“They’re not your parents and Ginny is your sister too!” George told her.

“We only need your help to find out some places they might be keeping Ginny.” Fred informed her.

Hermione shook her head. “This is my fault. I’m going to get her back safe to you.”

“We’re not going to let you do that.” Harry said. “The only way you’re helping is to tell us where she might be.”

Hermione sighed. "They used to lock me in the supply closet in their dentist office, and threaten me with the tools. Sometimes they would hide me in one of my relatives' houses. Every once in a while they would knock me unconscious and I would wake up somewhere and never find out where I was. I liked that best."

"Why?"

"Because sometimes they would leave me there all summer and never come back."

"Really?" Harry asked, almost sounding envious. Fred, George, and Ron watched them incredulously, until Ron cleared his throat.

"How does that help us find Ginny?"

"Well..." Hermione began, looking down at the duvet. She took a deep breath, and spoke very fast. "They're obviously going to want to put her somewhere that they can monitor to make sure she doesn't try anything and to make sure she stays there. They will want to make constant visits to beat her or torture her or something of the sort. They're going to want to ask her a lot of questions. They lost their jobs and their office when they got put in jail. My relatives are either dead or out of the country. I doubt they would move too far away, because they're going to need to take her somewhere where I will be able to get to them for the transaction."

"Slow down, Hermione." Ron recommended.

Hermione took a deep breath. "Sorry. It's just thinking of them." She took a moment to slow and then kept talking. "They will also want it to be some place that I will know of but no one else, so that the government can't find them."

"Can you think of any place like that?" Harry asked.

She burst into tears. "No! I'm sorry, I'm—"

"Hermione!" Harry said. "It's enough that you're trying! We aren't blaming this on you!"

“Don’t feel any pressure, Hermione.” Fred said.

“It’s not like you’re our only hope.” George said.

McGonagall walked into the hospital wing. “Good. You are all awake.”

“Any sign of her yet, Professor?” Harry asked.

“Unfortunately, Harry, no.”

“How are Mum and Dad?” Ron asked.

“Very worried and upset. They have done their part and can rest. Your brothers have been alerted and are on their way back to tend to them and help with the search.”

“We want to help!” Fred and George said together. McGonagall shook her head.

“You are all under very strict orders by both of your parents to attend your classes and not get in any trouble.” She said. “I suggest you follow them if you don’t want to find your mother sedated in St. Mungo’s.” With that, she left the hospital wing.

Hermione sighed. “Why did it have to be Ginny? She’s just going to incite them to hurt her more.”

Ron shook his head, snorting. “They deserve whatever Ginny gives to them.”

Hermione turned on him. “Don’t you understand? She deserves nothing they’re going to do to her! They’re going to do worse to her than she’s ever known!”

She stood up and sat on the edge of the bed. “This is—why won’t you just let me go to them?”

“Because they’ll kill you!”

“They’ll kill her!”

Perhaps one of the most powerful magics is silence. It will conquer people, rooms, homes, sometimes even cities. Silence is a magic that can only be broken with strong willpower. While it is easy to create and break, while the magic is working, it is often uncomfortable and unwanted. It will last forever if no one gets enough willpower to break it.

That one person in the hospital wing at that moment was Ronald Bilius Weasley. He had enough willpower to break the silence. But once he had, everyone wished he had just held his tongue.

“So she could already be dead?”

Hermione ran to the adjacent bathroom to vomit.

A/n In case you didn’t get it before, my respect for Percy is very low. I hate him. So he won’t be joining in on these little sibling talks.

But...I hope you enjoyed this. Thank you to everyone out there who took the time to read and a special thanks to all you who spent the ten-to-sixty seconds it took to review!

Disclaimer! I still am not Jo. Still Alison. Don't know why you might have any idea I'm Jo. I don't write nearly as well as she does.

A/n Wow. Okay. Seems you are passionate about this. Well, if you know anything about my obsession with Harry Potter and/or have read any of my other stories, you will know the outcome of this. If not...sucks to be you.

Topic number two: usually, I try to answer most of the reviews I get. But through these next few chapters, I'll be trying for the "suspense" persona, making it more difficult to answer your reviews. Sorry, but I will most likely end up giving myself away.

Here's the chapter.

"It's been over a month and a half, Hermione. We've checked all the places you have any recollection of and you have done everything you can. Stop blaming yourself for this." Harry ordered.

"By now she'll have gone over a month and a half without food." Hermione whined.

"Ginny's tough, Hermione." Percy said, nodding.

It had, indeed, been well over a month and a half since Ginny was kidnapped, and still no sign of her. The Aurors had little hope she'd be back in time for Christmas. This upset the Weasleys, specifically Hermione, remembering her Christmases past. No one but the Weasleys and the Ministry and the professors at Hogwarts knew why the six children were so upset all the time during classes, or why they were ignoring their friends to spend more time with each other or getting constant letters from home which they would sigh and cover their faces after reading.

Bill and Charlie had both made a few visits to Hogwarts, and they had all spoken with McGonagall much more than they would have liked. Molly, as they had heard, barely wanted to leave Ginny's bedroom. She slept there, had her meals there, and sat in there most of the day. Though she insisted to everyone she was okay, it was too obvious



she was not well at all. Her state left Bill there to cook dinner and take care of her. She seemed barely aware of this.

XoXoX

She didn't know how long it had been since she was in this place, but it was a long bloody time. The gentle ticking of the clock told her only the time, not the date. And all the time, she had gone without food and only half a glass of water a day. Each day they had beat her senseless and done horrible things to torture her. Countless times she thought it was the end. Death at the age of ten. It's what she fully expected, to be completely honest. All this time she had not given them the slightest clue as to where Hermione might be.

"As soon as we get our daughter back, your family will get your body back."

"You'll never kill me, you bastard." Ginny said, and he placed his foot on her stomach, adjusting himself and lifting his other foot off the ground, putting all his body weight on her. She swallowed the blood that came up.

As he left, she contemplated the reason she was alive and based it on magic. No matter how much blood she lost, she still had some left. Her heart kept beating. Her lungs kept breathing. She had a feeling even that jerk knew she was living longer than she was supposed to as well.

Lucky her.

XoXoX

Harry grabbed his Nimbus 2000 and trudged back to the castle with his family. They were hardly up to celebrating, even though Harry had made an amazing save after having been on a cursed broom. Hermione had ended up stopping it, though, and he was safe. He had then dived down to a foot off the ground and stood on his broom. It had resulted in him falling off, but he had caught the Snitch in his mouth and almost swallowed it. But they still weren't up to celebrating, this being the two month anniversary of Ginny's capture.

They did not go to the celebration, rather they toured around the castle for a while, dropping in for dinner at the nearly empty Gryffindor table. After that they snuck up to their dormitories and went to sleep. In Hermione's case, this was whilst crying.

The next morning Harry spent avoiding people trying to congratulate him and ask him many questions about the save by doing his homework. Hermione and Ron joined him, and Fred and George tried to get a hold of Bill and Charlie to see if there was any new information.

For the first time in three weeks, there was.

XoXoX

The twins rushed into the common room and sat across from the others. They looked at them and their excited faces.

"What's going on?"

"They have a lead on where she might be." They whispered together. Ron, Harry, and Hermione all packed up their books and they followed Fred and George into an empty classroom.

"What are you talking about?" Hermione asked. "What do you mean they have a lead?"

"Some landlord in London got reports that blood was leaking from the ceiling of one of her flats. When she went to check it out, she found two lease holders who said they were having the same leak, but the flat above them had no idea what was going on. She reported it to the police to see if there was any domestic violence going on, and the flat that knew nothing didn't have anything suspicious, but the flat below that did. They just need to get a warrant to search the place."

"So they think that Ginny might be there?"

George sighed. "Well...if she's not..."

Fred looked at them. “they don’t know where else to look. They—they might even give up the case.”

“It’s only been a little over two months!”

“And this is the only decent lead we’ve been fed.” Fred reasoned.

“They’re getting fed up.” George said.

XoXoX

Molly was thrilled to find they had a lead on Ginny, but also frightened. Her daughter had lost enough blood that it was seeping through the carpet and drywall to leak into the flat below. She had been staying in Ginny’s room for the last three weeks, when they had run out of places to check. Always with her was the letter that started this all. The letter they received from the Grangers the day Ginny was kidnapped. It was tear-stained and crumpled, and the ink was smeared, but it did not matter, because Molly had memorized every word on it.

As you may know, we are out of jail. We will be coming for our daughter. You can’t hide her from her. We know she is there. If you hand her over immediately and with no struggle, no one will get hurt. She is our daughter, and she means a lot to us. We were wrongly accused. We are out to prove this is true. But for that, we need her. You will hand her over. Expect bad things if you do not.

She wailed and placed her head in her arms. Someone knocked on the door, and then she heard it open. Bill’s voice rang through the previously still air.

“Mum. The Aurors are on their way over there right now. This is a very important case. It has to deal with more than child abuse.”

She kept crying.

“At least we know now that Ginny is alive.”

“She could be dead!”

“And bleeding? The tenants said that it was a recurring thing. Someone in there is bleeding a lot. She has to be alive.” He placed his hand on her shoulder. “And I don’t know about you, but I for one am sure Ginny would not let herself die at the hands of the Grangers.”

Molly sniffed, gripping the letter more. “This is my fault. If I had just agreed to send this letter to Hermione and Albus...this never would have happened. She wouldn’t have been mad at me, and she wouldn’t have gone to the fence.”

“She needed to think.”

“When she needs to think she goes to the roof. When she needs to think away from me she goes to the fence.”

“That’s not your fault either.” Bill said. “Why doesn’t she think in bed like normal people?”

“Your sister is not normal.” Molly said. “She needs to see the sky when she thinks. At night she has to watch the stars and in the day she’ll look at clouds and think of everything. She doesn’t have a good view of the stars from how her furniture is arranged in her room.” She looked around, her eyes tearing up. “I fixed it for her.”

Bill looked around and saw that it was, indeed, fixed. One bed had a clear view out the widest visual range of the window, the other in the same place on the opposite wall, and all the tall objects—the bookcases and the wardrobe—were on walls that wouldn’t be in her line of vision. One desk was right in front of the window, and the other was next to the door. Bill shook his head, realizing how much planning this must have taken.

“C’mon, Mum. Let’s go get some tea and talk about this.” He said, forcing her to stand up. She sniffled and followed him.

XoXoX

“How do they expect us just to sit here when the most important event of our lives is going on?” Ron groaned.

“I don’t even think they know—or care, for that matter—how important this is.” Hermione complained.

“Cops, Aurors—they’re around death too much to care. They’re desensitized.” Harry shrugged. “We’re not like that. We see death as something horrible, something we don’t have to deal with. They see death as paperwork.”

Their exaggerated reactions and thoughts were all reasonable. It had been four hours since the Aurors had left to search the flat. They had no information yet, and Bill has said that Molly was in hysterics. While they didn’t blame her, it was still hard to hear. She was their mother, and they didn’t want to see her sad. But then again, they were all trying to hold back tears for each others’ benefit.

Hermione was the worst off. She still couldn’t grasp the fact that her parents would go to such lengths, and more so, she was horrified that they had. She also couldn’t manage to get it through her normally open mind that it was not her fault. Another fact that troubled her would be that no students at Hogwarts knew about the kidnapping. So Hermione, who had taken to the very little-known philosophy “late to bed, early to rise makes a child appreciate caffeine,” tried to act normal as all possible.

Due to Molly’s orders, they were still in their same high positions in all their classes, except Ron, who was still stuck in the middle ranks. But it was not as if they were paying close attention to their schoolwork. They simply trudged through it, in a half-fog, doing just what was enough to keep their average.

Even Fred and George had stopped pulling pranks. They had stopped making jokes. The school was terrified, having never been faced with a force grand enough to keep Fred and George Weasley from telling jokes. It was rather depressing, but in their fog, the twins seemed to have forgotten that their being depressed also caused the whole school to be depressed. This was something they had never noticed, and had their fog been thinner, they would have realized it

and been honored. To think the laughter of Hogwarts relied on them was the greatest honor they had ever been bestowed.

They attended their classes that Monday, but they only paid attention with a quarter of their minds. The other three-quarters were used to wonder what exactly the Aurors might find, if anything, in that flat. They all imagined different things. Fred and George, the optimists, both imagined a simple prison-cell like room, with empty food trays and empty glasses of water and a small camp bed and a large window with a great view, that Ginny was sitting in front of.

Ron, the realist, imagined a horribly bruised and undernourished Ginny in a dark room with no furniture or window.

Harry, the cynic, imagined nothing. He imagined an empty room and no sign of blood or struggle on either floor, giving the Aurors a reason to give up, and he imagined never being able to see Ginny again, besides maybe at a funeral the Grangers were reasonable enough to hold.

Hermione, the experienced, imagined a bloody Ginny with several bruises and broken bones that was starved and dehydrated and sleep-deprived and shaking and tortured.

Even Percy, the numb, imagined something while sitting in class that day. He imagined not what the room would look like, but what the trial would look like. This scenario was envisioned in two different ways: one with Ginny, and one without. Through both daydreams, he continued to take notes and pay attention as well as he could.

One way or the other, after dinner, all the Weasleys were scheduled to an appointment with Professor McGonagall to hear about the result of the search.

None of them, though, had an appetite once dinner came around. They all stood from the Great Hall and walked to McGonagall's office, Harry holding Hermione's hand to stop them from shaking. After one knock on McGonagall's door, they were told to come in by her solemn voice, speaking in a tone they did not pick up on, a tone they could

not decipher. So they simply walked in, refused offers to sit down, and stared intently at their professor.

“As you know,” She said. “the Aurors had little hope for this. I have just been alerted of the results.”

“And?” Ron said impatiently.

“And...” McGonagall began, but she was interrupted by the author.

XoXoX

Three Aurors, Charlie Weasley, and two police officers were in the raid, and when they knocked on the door, the resident of the flat did not seem very happy. The police officers flashed their badges.

“Sir, we have a reason to believe illegal activities are taking place in this flat. If you will please step out of the residence, we have a warrant,” He held up the warrant. “to search your home.”

The man, narrowing his eyes, stepped out of the flat. At this, the Aurors and Charlie charged in, looking in every nook and cranny, as the officers talked to the man. They asked him questions that were meant to trick him, but he chose to remain silent and turn the tables, asking them why they had reasons to believe “illegal activities” were taking place in his flat. He told them he lived in the flat with his wife, and upon their asking where his wife was, he tensed and told them she was sleeping, so urged them not to wake her up.

The officers responded by saying they’d wake up—and I’m paraphrasing here—whoever the hell they wanted.

Meanwhile, the Aurors were busting into every room and finding nothing. They were performing undetectable spells to help, but it wasn’t until Charlie said, “I got something!” that they had any idea of what might be going on in the flat.

That “something” was a door that blended in perfectly with the wall, except for one little crack. Charlie pressed his body weight against the space next to the crack and found the wall spinning around to a

secret room. Calling in the Aurors without taking a look, he raised his wand.

There was another door behind that, one that was metal reinforced, and that had several locks on it. He cast an Alohomora spell on it, and it flew open. Again without looking inside, he waited for the rest of the Aurors to come in. With one look inside they pulled Charlie away from the sight, telling him hastily and with many stammers to go tell the officers what they had found.

Blood was splattered everywhere. Some of it was wet, some of it was dry. It was all over the wall, the floor, and the huddled mass in the corner. Nothing was in the room but that huddled mass, a chamber pot, and a clock. Even the clock had blood on its face.

But a closer look told them there was another in the room. She was holding a knife over the huddled mass, though when the light poured into the room, she tried to hide in the shadows. One Auror ran forward and grabbed her, pulling her arms behind her back and trying not to catch a closer look at the huddled mass. The bravest Auror—the leader, no doubt—looked closer at it. He nodded, telling them it fit the description of who they were looking for.

“Is—is she dead?”

The Auror shook his head. “I’d be amazed if she wasn’t.”

A/n Sorry. I’m evil. If I mean for the cliffie or I mean for the condition Ginny is in, you won’t find out until next chapter.

I’d like again to thank all the readers and reviewers and people who put an alert on this story and/or favorited it. I think I had a minor coronary when I saw that I had TWO HUNDRED reviews for this story. I THANK YOU, I LOVE YOU, I WILL SEE YOU NEXT TIME!!



Disclaimer! I do not own Harry Potter. Sadly.

A/n All right. Here's that answer you've been wanting.

Previously...

"As you know," She said. "the Aurors had little hope for this. I have just been alerted of the results."

"And?" Ron said impatiently.

"And..." McGonagall began, but she was interrupted by the author.

McGonagall's eye swept over them. "They found her."

They all sighed with relief, then caught something. "Is she alive?"

McGonagall sighed. "For now."

"What does 'for now' mean?" Hermione asked.

"She's in critical condition. After almost nine weeks of starvation, dehydration, no sleep, and the beatings and torture she was receiving, she should be dead. The Aurors were amazed she was still breathing and thanked her magic. She sustained severe damage to her spinal cord and she will be in a wheelchair for a while. We can know one thing out of this."

"What?"

"Ginny is a very strong witch if she can survive that situation through magic." McGonagall said. "She's in St. Mungo's right now. You have been given permission to skip your classes tomorrow to see her. Your parents and two brothers are already at her side, very paranoid."

"I don't envy Bill and Charlie right now." George said. Fred shook his head.

"I know. Can't be easy with Mum there."

None of them were sure if that was a joke, so they all chuckled once, hollowly. They thanked Professor McGonagall and walked out of the office. Upon leaving it, Hermione fell against a wall, her eyes closed.

"I've never been less skeptical there is a God." She whispered to no one in particular. "Thank you, thank you so much."

"C'mon, Hermione. You haven't slept in two days. Let's get you to sleep." Harry said, taking her hand and pulling her up. She followed him, and they all sent her off to her dormitory so the boys could talk as brothers.

"Now what are we planning to do if—if Ginny doesn't—" Harry couldn't even add a verb. The giant lump in his throat forbade him from saying anything.

"We'll do nothing." Percy said. "We'll comfort our parents, because they'll need it...but she wouldn't want us to be upset."

"That won't stop me." Fred and George said at the exact same time, and it did not slip past everyone's mind that they said 'me' as opposed to 'us,' as if for once they were unsure they all were on same terms. So Ron and Harry spoke.

"It would never be the same without her." Ron said.

"We'll always be nine." Harry said. "From now to the end, no matter how many we lose along the way."

"But what about Hermione?" Ron asked.

"What about her?" Harry retorted.

"If Ginny—she'll never forgive herself. And we all know here it isn't her fault."

"It's no one's fault." Percy said.

"Mum and Hermione think differently." George pointed out.

XoXoX

“Mum.” Charlie said, walking into the hall. “The Healers say you can go in.”

Bill put his hand on her shoulder. “She—she’s not awake, but—if you really want to...”

She stood without another word and walked into the wing. Ginny was one of the front most beds, her condition so critical that she needed to be closer to an entrance for the Healers to reach. One look at her and Molly burst into tears. Every inch of her face was bruised and cut, and in some places there was still dried blood. On her arm were bandages, covering something, but long blood marks were on the bandages. The thin sheet which fell over her figure revealed that she was much skinnier than she had been nine weeks previous. A breathing machine was hooked up and it was too obvious that she couldn’t breathe on her own. The Healer walked over to Molly.

“What did they do to her?” Molly breathed.

“She obviously hasn’t eaten since the abduction, she is very dehydrated, she shows signs of struggle, obviously they beat her severely, and it looks as though they tortured her in some ways. We can’t be sure until she wakes up how exactly that went about, though. There was damage to her spinal cord, and it may be a few months of physical therapy before she can walk on her own, that is considering she makes it out of this. Because of her lack of nutrition, her body couldn’t heal the injuries she sustained, but after these conditions I’m surprised she lived at all. Your daughter has very strong magic. You should be proud.”

Molly nodded, tears glistening in her eyes. “I am.”

The Healer nodded. “I will leave you alone.”

As soon as he left, Molly collapsed into a chair next to the bed and stared at her. The door opened and closed once more, and she soon felt a hand on her shoulder, squeezing it gently in a way only Arthur could. But once his eye caught a glimpse of his baby girl, the

squeeze became harder, and he eventually took his hand off his wife's shoulder in fear of hurting her.

"Hermione is going to see this."

Molly sniffed. "They all are."

XoXoX

The Weasleys all met up in the Gryffindor common room instead of their first class, as directed by McGonagall. They Flooed to St. Mungo's and walked to the reception's desk.

"Where's the intensive care ward?" Fred asked, drumming his hands on the table. The "welcome" witch—she didn't seem very welcoming at all to them—sighed, not even looking up from her apparently engrossing magazine as she answered them.

"Can't you read?" She said, pointing to the floor map.

Fred narrowed his eyes. George popped out from behind him. "We're here to see Ginny Weasley."

The witch looked up at them all. "Oh. Yes." She gave them directions to the intensive care ward, and only Harry and Hermione, out of nervous habit, thanked her. They walked together up to the designated floor and into the ward.

The first thing they saw was Molly sitting in a chair at the edge of a bed. Her back was turned to them and she was obstructing their view of the person in the bed. Bill and Charlie slowly approached them, pushed them into the hall, and sighed.

"Is she okay?"

"Neither of them." Bill said. "Ginny's on constant watch, she could die any moment. As for Mum, she hasn't left that chair since she got the call. She's been staring at Ginny for almost twelve hours straight. I don't know what she's thinking, and I don't want to know either."

“Could the Healers tell by any of the injuries what they might have done to her?” Hermione asked quietly.

Charlie sighed. “Starved her, tortured her, gave her several concussions, two hundred broken bones, and from the looks of it stabbed her with a steak knife.”

“People keep saying tortured! How did they torture her?” Hermione groaned.

Bill and Charlie both shrugged. “We can’t be sure until she wakes up.” The latter said.

Hermione sighed. “Is there anything else?”

The oldest Weasley brothers exchanged a look. “If she makes it out,” Bill said. “She’s not going to be able to walk for a long time. Her spinal cord’s hanging by a thread.”

“Can we see her?” Harry asked.

“Yeah.” Charlie said, stepping out of their way. They filed into the ward, walking toward the bed. Only four other patients were there, and only one other was unconscious. The other three were staring at the two unconscious patients. Specifically, at Ginny, and her age. She was easily the youngest there.

Hermione took one look at Ginny and walked right out. No one bothered to go after her, or they were all too distracted to go after her. Ginny was in a bad way. Every inch of her was a bruise or bandage. She had IV potions going into her bloodstream and a breathing machine going into her nose. Her eyes didn’t even flutter the least bit, and her hair was still streaked with blood.

“Get used to this place.” A person in the bed across from Ginny said. “You’ll be here a lot with how she looks.”

Harry looked around. “Where’s Hermione?” He whispered to Bill. The latter whirled around and shrugged. With a sigh, Harry left, calling

Hermione's name after exiting the ward. She did not answer, but he did hear crying coming from around the corner.

Indeed, there she was.

"Hey, Hermione. What's wrong?"

"What's wrong?" She sobbed.

"Rhetorical question." He said. "What's got you this upset though? I know she's your sister, but I feel there's something more to this."

"The people who gave birth to me almost took a life!" Hermione shouted. "They almost killed Ginny because they wanted me! These people gave birth to me, they gave me life! I have their genes! I have their blood coursing through my veins as we speak!"

Harry stared into her eyes defiantly. "Love is thicker than blood, Hermione."

"Insanity is thicker than fear!" She retorted. "They are so insane that they weren't even afraid of what they might do to Ginny! She was just another life to them! But she's my best friend! She's my sister! How can someone so important to me be so meaningless to them?"

"They don't love you, Hermione!" Harry told her. "How can anyone love the person they use as a punching bag?"

"Some part of them must love me!"

"Why do you want their approval, Hermione? Why do you want their love? Why do you want something that is impossible?"

"They almost killed someone because they wanted me back in their arms, how could they feel nothing for me?"

"They feel hatred! They feel indifferent! They don't care about you, Hermione! They care about them! They care about how having a daughter makes them look! They don't care about you! Accept it! I hate to see you wanting their love! You'll just get disappointed! Have

they ever given you any reason to believe they loved you without at the same time giving you a reason to believe they belong in an asylum?"

"I—They—"

"Listen to yourself, Hermione!" Harry interjected. "You're saying 'they'! You aren't calling them your parents! Why do they care if they love you?"

"How would you feel if you didn't think your parents loved you?"

"Just how I did when the Dursleys told me that was true! Abandoned! Cynical! Worthless! But sure as hell not desperate for affection and love!"

He stomped off, mumbling to himself to calm down. They had easily and quickly learned to speak their minds to each other. Speaking their mind to anyone other than Hermione for Harry and Harry for Hermione was near impossible still. Fear is simply overpowering sometimes.

As he approached the ward, he heard a beeping noise and saw red heads being ushered into the hall. He heightened his speed to a run.

"What's happening?" Harry asked upon approaching them, though none of them looked in the position to answer.

Arthur, who had tears rolling down his face, was cradling a wailing, sobbing Molly, whose head was buried into his chest and looked as though she could barely hold herself up. The twins were sitting on the bench, identical looks of pain and fear on their faces. Percy had his hands covering his face. Ron was huddled up in front of the bench, hugging his knees to his chest and gently rocking back and forth, his eyes wide and his mouth straight. Charlie was rolling his forehead over the wall, his fist clenched and resting on the wall next to his head. Bill had his hand on his mother's shoulder, trying to look composed, being the eldest sibling and all. He ended up answering Harry.

“S-she stopped breathing. The Healers are trying to get her to start back up.”

XoXoX

Hermione was sobbing, sitting against the wall. Harry was right. Why, why did she want to be loved by people who caused her so much pain? Why was it so necessary for her? She felt rejected, she felt like no one wanted her, just because they didn't. It was perhaps the worse feeling she ever had. Yes, of course, they wanted her, but for all the wrong reasons. No good parents who loved their child would have been in jail for child abuse. They wouldn't have lost their child. If Hermione's parents had ever loved her, she wouldn't be sitting against that hospital hall wall at that moment. Ginny wouldn't be a snail's crawl away from death.

She sighed and looked down the hall. The door to a pediatrics ward was open. Children were smiling inside, they were playing with toys. Their parents were there to make sure they didn't wander too far or hurt themselves. Hermione so deeply wanted to go in there and tell each and every one of them how lucky they were. But to tell the truth, she was luckier. She was moved from an awful to a marvelous place, from terrifying to terrific. She had a lot of people that cared about her and loved her very much. They taught her a lot of things that she wouldn't have learned otherwise. In actuality, though her past wants to deceive you, she was the luckiest girl in the whole hospital.

And Ginny perhaps the unluckiest.

Someone ran down the hall and grabbed her arm. She began to panic and resist until she saw it was Harry. After that discovery, she followed him back to the hall outside the intensive care ward, where all the Weasleys were gathered. Molly and Arthur were crying in each other's arms. Fred and George were indistinguishable even in their shock and fear. Ron looked seven years younger. Charlie looked seven years older. Percy was, for once, showing the emotions of concern and fear and sadness. Bill appeared to be in the attempt of keeping himself calm to be there as support. Hermione looked between them and shook her head.



“She—”

Harry put his finger to her lips to shush her. In a low voice, he said, “The Healers are trying to keep her breathing. She’s crashing.”

Hermione’s mind filled with a mysterious fog. All her thoughts were covered like clouds cover the clear blue sky. Her brain could not process the littlest things. She lost all feeling. The next thing she knew, though, she was walking through the door to the ward and toward the bed. Healers tried to take her away, but she stood her ground.

“Ginny.” She said. “Please. Don’t die.”

She simply could not imagine a life without her sister. Her bedroom would be so empty. Forget that. She would probably never sleep in that bedroom if Ginny could not join her. It had been Ginny’s before Hermione ever came. It was never Hermione’s room. It was Ginny and Hermione’s room. It was the girls’ room. Plural possessive. Not girl’s. Not singular possessive. It just didn’t work that way.

Who would she talk to about things that bothered her? About girl things? Molly? That would be like talking to your mother. Ginny was much better than that. She had motherly qualities that she had turned into sisterly qualities. Nothing ever got past Ginny, and nothing ever got out of Ginny. Secrets were secrets forever as long as you told them to her. Who would she ever find that could do the same?

She never got a chance to go to Hogwarts. After watching every single one of her siblings—all eight of them, for godsakes—get on the Hogwarts Express, she never got to get on herself. All her life she had been looking forward to going to Hogwarts, to learning to become a witch, but if she died, she wouldn’t even be able to read her acceptance letter.

That’s why she couldn’t die. She couldn’t leave. Because her only place was not the bedroom and Hogwarts. She was in the hearts of many people. She was one of the first people Hermione felt comfortable talking to. She took special interest in Hermione. She gave Hermione a feeling of comfort she got from no one else. She

made it a job to protect Hermione. She stopped fighting with her mother to stop Hermione from getting upset. People don't just do that. Special people do that. Ginny was a special person.

She couldn't die yet.

Hermione's heart would be empty without Ginny. It would be a hole nothing could fix. Sisters are supposed to be together forever. Ginny couldn't die unless Hermione was dying too. It was as clear-cut as that. Sisters forever, through thick and thin, through love and heartbreak, through delight and depression, through prosperity and poverty. They were supposed to support each other, help each other. Ginny told her many times how Hermione had saved her from a life surrounded by boys, and Hermione in turn had told her that Ginny saved her from a life of pain and sadness and wallowing. But if Ginny died...

And they had only spent four years together. They barely knew each other. Ginny couldn't die, not yet.

It wasn't fair. Ginny still had a whole life to live. Hermione shook her head. Why can't God take the monsters who did this to her? They're the antagonists in this story. The antagonist deserves to die.

But she had read too many books to not know that sometimes, in works of tragedy, the protagonist fails. The antagonist prevails. It wasn't fair, that's just how it worked.

Please. It isn't her time yet. Please.

The rest of the Weasleys had come into the room. Bill had his arm around Hermione, trying to pull her away from the Healers. But Hermione wouldn't budge. Tears rocketed down her face and she shook her head 'no.' It wasn't true. It couldn't be true. The Healers were still performing spells. She wasn't revived yet. Bill was still trying to pull her away. But Hermione kept her feet planted on the ground.

Everything went in slow motion. The Healers exchanged a look that was clear to everyone that this was their last shot. All the Weasleys

held their breath. Bill's grip around Hermione's shoulders relaxed, his eyes widening, staring toward the dying body in front of him.

Thoughts raced through all their heads.

I barely knew her. I barely got a chance. What kind of brother am I? was Bill's train of thought.

All that blood. That blood will haunt me forever. That couldn't have all been her blood, was Charlie thought as he watched his sister. It was someone else's. She's going to live.

No, was the only thought that Percy could get through his head. The rest of it was blank and drained by shock and fear. He had no control. He was simply horrified. As smart as he was usually, that's how dumb he was in times of high emotional stress.

This isn't happening. I'm going to wake up any moment. This isn't happening. I'm going to wake up any moment in my four-poster bed, right next to George's, tell him all about the dream, and then we'll get a letter from Ginny asking why we haven't gotten detention in nine weeks. Yeah. That's exactly it, Fred plotted. He had it all outlined. That's what was going to happen. No one at that moment could convince him otherwise.

George was thinking along similar lines. He had a plan about what this all was too. This isn't true. I'm in a Dark curse, or...or an illusion. An elaborate boggart. This isn't really happening. I'm going to come into consciousness in the hospital wing and Ginny will be right there. Merlin I'm going to hug her tight. So tight even Mum will be jealous. I won't ever let her go.

I've been a rotten brother, Ron thought. I was always bothering her and she always hated me. Why did I have to make her hate me so much? Why couldn't I have been a nice older brother, like the twins or like Harry? They were always nice to Ginny. I bet they aren't having any doubts. I never let her play Quidditch with us. I always kicked her out of rooms. I was always yelling at her. I'm a foul excuse for an older brother. The worst part is that I actually care about her.

Why Ginny? Harry begged to no one in his thoughts. Why must she die out of all of us? She has so much going for her. She hasn't even tasted Hogwarts yet. She's the youngest. We're supposed to protect her forever. She can't be dying. She has to live. It's the only fair thing to do. Fate has already been evil to her. Don't take it so far. Please. She deserves to live more than I do.

Molly and Arthur couldn't even get coherent thoughts running through their heads. Even their brains were sobbing. This could be the end of their baby.

A/n I'm evil with these cliffies, aren't I?

Disclaimer! Instead of the usual disclaimer, I'd like you to think for a moment. Why would J.K. Rowling be writing fanfiction? And AU fanfiction for that matter? Take a moment. Think.

A/n It's fun reading these recent reviews. Sorry I haven't responded, and also sorry if your idea didn't come up in the story, because I already had it completely written out before I posted the chapter where she was kidnapped. I was too lazy to rewrite. Also, to PrettyFanGirl, I would have to say torturing you was the most fun. And HermioneWatsonFan, I got the point at fifteen, though I must say you have outdone yourself with thirty-nine...those I suppose following the pattern would mean doing eighty-seven (times two plus nine), and frankly that is WAY too much.

But no more delay! I'm sure you're all anxious!

The Weasleys sat outside the ward again, in the hall. They were all still a little confused about what happened in there, specifically, about what they should be feeling. The Healers walked out of the double doors, giving them solemn nods as they passed. In response, the Weasleys did the same, though much more uncaring than they would have preferred. They would have liked to put more thanks into it, thanks for trying so hard, thanks for not giving up.

Finally, Hermione wiped the stray tears off her face, stood up, and hugged Molly. The latter hugged back, beaming. In fact, they all beamed, happier than they had been in a long time. Not only had Ginny lived, but she had woken up for a split second, only to be placed under the influence of a heaving Draught of Peace. She would be out for two more days, and they expected very few more scares such as that.

So over the weekend, Percy, Fred, George, Hermione, Ron, and Harry were all allowed by McGonagall and Dumbledore to go to St. Mungo's to see their sister while she was awake.

XoXoX

After the Weasleys returned to Hogwarts, the whole atmosphere of the school changed. They were all happy, and the rest of the school

was happy because the twins went back to joking and playing pranks. It had been so long and they came back with such a bang no one even bothered to ask them why they had stopped. Harry performed so well in Quidditch practice that Oliver knew they would win their next match. They all studied hard and slept well and ate a lot. It was just too good to be true. Ginny was alive and the Healers predicted her to wake up soon.

But when Saturday rolled around, they got an unpleasant surprise from the Healers.

Ginny hadn't woken up yet. The potion had worn off, but she was still unconscious. She was still missing a bit of blood and proper nutrition, since all she was getting was IV nutrition. As a result her bruises were still there and her cuts were still bright against them. She was still paper thin, the thing that bothered a few of the Healers most. Records of physicals past told them that Ginny had always been very skinny for her age, and the fact that she was even skinnier now made them worry about how long her magic could keep up supporting her.

This, unfortunately, was a concern they shared with the Weasleys. The only thing that settled Molly was the reminders from Harry and Hermione that they had survived for a long time at a lower weight than Ginny was at. She was so upset that she failed to realize the age difference, and everyone seemed to "forget" to mention it. Bill and Charlie were allowed to spend some time working in England instead of their usual working abroad to help with their family. Remus and Sirius made a visit to the hospital to watch the younger Weasleys while the two boys were at work and Molly and Arthur wanted some time alone with Ginny. Before that, they had often visited to check on Molly. Even they couldn't make jokes.

That Saturday was quiet and rather boring. They stayed the night at the hospital, finding it pointless to go to the Burrow just to come back the next day. Bill, Charlie, Arthur, and Sirius all had night shifts at their respective jobs, but Remus and Molly stayed with them. They all slept on the floor by Ginny's bed. The Healers didn't mind, finding it heartening that they were such a close family, but also sad that one of their numbers was so sick.

A surprise came at about three in the morning, when they were all asleep, save Hermione, who was sitting on the bed and staring at Ginny.

XoXoX

“What are we supposed to do about this?” Kingsley Shacklebolt asked in the meeting of Aurors that same night. “Turn them over to the Muggle police?”

“The sheer fact that she is alive will make them think the conditions weren’t as bad as they were, and they will probably just end up in prison for another three to five years. Maybe because of their record they will be denied parole, but you can count on them not taking serious enough actions.” Rufus Scrigemour said. “Auror Black, what is your report?”

“The Healers expected her to wake up today.” He said in a strained voice. Having already finished his Auror training with James many years ago, they allowed Sirius to rejoin the Aurors with only a year of refresh training, teaching him new spells that had been created within his absence and to make sure he was physically able for the job. “But while the Draught of Peace wore off, she is still unconscious and refuses to wake up.”

“Her consciousness is an important part of this operation, as you can all probably assume.” Scrigemour said. “We are left no choice but to try the Grangers against the Wizengamot, assuming the prime minister agrees.”

“Will she have to provide Penseive memories?” One of the newer Aurors asked. All of the others tensed, especially Sirius. They turned to the Auror, serious looks on their faces.

“Providing Penseive memories takes more magical training than she has, training we don’t have time for.” Scrigemour told him. “The Penseive of a third party will be provided.”

“You mean—?” The new Auror began, a contorted look on his face.

“Yes.” Sirius interrupted ruefully. “That’s exactly what he means.”

XoXoX

Hermione whirled around. She nudged Molly with her foot, and the latter immediately woke up. Seeing it was just Hermione, she leaned back and sighed.

“What’s wrong, Hermione?”

“Why are you here, too? What’s going on, where am I?”

Molly jumped up. It had been two months since she heard that voice, but she would recognize it after ten years. She hugged Ginny tightly before remembering how painful that must have been for her daughter. The latter, either out of habit or for Molly’s sake, did not show that she was at all in pain, but instead looked up at her mother and sister, confused.

“Where am I?” Ginny breathed. “The last thing I remember is her holding a knife over me and telling that I’d never see my family again, that she was going to kill me. S-She didn’t, did she? Am I dead?”

Hermione shook her head. “You’re alive. Ginny, you scared me so much!”

Ginny’s eyes widened. “They didn’t get to you, did they?”

Hermione shook her head once again.

“Th-They were going to kill me because I wouldn’t tell them where you were. I knew they were going to hurt you.”

With a scoff, Hermione said, “Well they hurt you more. You almost died, Ginny. It’s lucky your magic kept you alive this long. The Healers and Aurors were all amazed.”

Ginny looked around. “Why are you all here? Don’t you have school?”



"You were missing for nine weeks, Ginny, Dumbledore allowed us to leave this weekend."

"Nine weeks?!" Ginny shouted accidentally, unable to contain herself. As soon as she did, though, she started coughing ferociously, blood appearing on her fist when she pulled it back from her mouth. "How long have I been unconscious?"

"A week." Molly said, staring at the blood on Ginny's hand. The others were stirring due to the noise Ginny had made, and as Harry slowly opened his eyes, he grinned.

"Ginny!"

That woke up the rest of them. Remus ran off to go tell a Healer, while the rest of the Weasleys took their time to greet their sister. Ginny, however, noticed something and turned to her mother as Remus came by with a Healer.

"Mum, I can't move my legs." She said. The Weasleys all exchanged looks. Ginny looked between them all. A tear fell down Hermione's face, her smile from a moment ago gone. None of them were smiling anymore, not even the twins, and they always smiled. Molly sighed and placed her hand on Ginny's shoulder, but Ginny twisted and pulled back. "What's wrong?"

"You had an injury to your spinal cord so severe that not even magic could fix it. It will take a lot of physical therapy for you to walk again." Molly said quietly. Ginny looked up at her, seeming to be confused.

"Ginny," The Healer interrupted. "I know you probably don't want to think about it now, but some Aurors will come here in the morning to ask you some questions. If you don't answer them, the Grangers won't get what they deserve for doing this to you."

She nodded. With faraway eyes, a straight mouth, and so many bruises and bandages, she didn't look like a ten-year-old. They couldn't place if she looked older or younger. But she did not look her age. She mumbled something, but none of them caught it.

“What was that, Gin?” Fred asked.

“I said I want to talk to Hermione.” She iterated. “Preferably alone.”

They all nodded, and they left the room, leaving Ginny, Hermione, and the other four patients all alone. Hermione stared at Ginny, her eyes wide and tears still falling. The latter shook her head, almost reading Hermione’s mind. But Hermione didn’t believe her. She nodded. They continued this silent argument for a long time, until Ginny reached out and took Hermione’s tear-streaked face in her hands.

“This is not your fault, Hermione.” Ginny said. “I was sitting on that wall because I wanted to. I talked back to them because I wanted to.”

“They never would have done this to you had I just gone with them.”

“No!” She shouted. “Do you know why I won’t be able to walk? Do you know why I have all these bruises? Do you know why I coughed up blood a few minutes ago? Why I was unconscious for Merlin knows how long?” She lifted Hermione’s head, with was tilting down to the sheets. “It’s because I talked back to them. Because I fought back. Because I wouldn’t answer their questions. I am lying here so hurt because I didn’t want them to get their hands on you, Hermione. I am ashamed of you for having even considered giving up and gone to them. While it wasn’t my decision to be abducted, it was my decision to fight back, it was my decision to tell them to sod off. None of this is on your accord.”

Hermione started to cry again. “What—how—?”

“I don’t want to talk about it right now, Hermione.” Ginny said, tears rolling down her face. “Not right now, please.”

Hermione nodded. “I understand.”

“I have not a doubt in my mind that you do.” She said, wiping a tear from her face. “I’m going to be fine, you know. If I survived this whole time, I’m going to be fine.”

"You can thank you magic for that." Hermione said. "Without it you would be dead."

Ginny stared at Hermione. "I thought they were Obliviated of the whole magical world?"

Hermione nodded. "They were...apparently they neglected to make them forget about all of you."

Nodding thoughtfully and still with faraway eyes, Ginny asked another question. "Why were you sitting on my bed? You should have been sleeping, Hermione."

"I couldn't sleep." Hermione whispered. "I haven't slept in thirty hours. How could I sleep if I didn't know if you would be okay?"

Ginny smiled, falling back on the pillows and letting out a gasp. "You know there's something wrong when a pillow hurts you." She groaned. "Let the rest of them in. They need to sleep."

Hermione grinned. Even with so many injuries, she was worrying more about the rest of her family sleeping. She stood and walked over to the door, realizing that she would have to do things like this for Ginny a lot. The latter could no longer walk without help. She could not begin to imagine how life-changing that could be. Of course, she would get better...maybe...

When the others came in, Fred and George shook their heads. "So, Gin...it looks like you fought back?" George said. Ginny smiled, trying not to show them the pain she was feeling and an overwhelming tiredness that she was experiencing. Her stomach was tied in knots due to starvation; her throat was a tunnel of stone and her mouth a cave from dehydration. But they were already worried.

"Yeah." She said. "And I cussed them out a few times."

George clapped her on the shoulder—gently, mind—and Fred wiped an imaginary tear from his eye. "I've never been more proud of you, kid." Fred said. She smiled.

“Can I get some water?” She asked no one in particular. Her mother grabbed a goblet from the side table and mumbled the Agumenti charm, and Ginny drank it in one gulp. As she tried to turn over, she realized her legs didn’t want to go with her. In frustration, she gave up and stayed on her back, even though it hurt. For some reason, she felt ashamed to use her hands to move her legs with her in front of her whole family.

“Where’s Dad?” She asked quietly.

“He’s at work, there was an emergency and they wouldn’t let him stay.” Harry said. “Bill and Charlie are at work, too.”

“They came?” She said. They all nodded, looking incredulous.

“Of course. Why wouldn’t they?” Percy asked her.

Ginny shook her head. “I don’t know. Sorry.”

“How are you feeling, Ginny?” Remus asked. It was a stupid question, being the reason why none of them asked it before, but it would be good to get away from that awkward conversation. She shrugged.

“Probably better than I have in nine weeks.” Ginny replied truthfully, with a smile. “Th—They actually had me half convinced I’d never see my family again.”

As tears fell down her face, all of them leaned in and hugged her. She sighed as they pulled back, looking at the other patients.

“What ward is this?”

“The intensive care ward. For critical cases.” Remus said.

“Critical?” Ginny reiterated, sounding afraid. “I’m—My case is critical?”

They all exchanged looks again. “You almost died.” Molly told her. “They were sure you were going to. But you lived at the last second. The Healers almost gave up.”

Ginny nodded. "You miss a lot when you're in what could only be a life-threatening coma." She shrugged. "Did I miss anything else? The native language of Britain didn't change from English to Icelandic, did it?"

"Not that we're aware of." George said. "Though anything is possible."

"You should all get to sleep." Ginny said, seeing Ron stifle a yawn behind his hand. "You've probably haven't been getting enough of it lately."

"Well if it isn't the pot calling the kettle black." Hermione said. "My parents never let anyone but themselves sleep."

"I just slept for a week straight, Hermione."

"But you're still tired, aren't you?"

Ginny sighed. "Damn." She swore out of habit, but no one seemed to care. They all lay down in the spots they had been before and began to sleep, Ginny turning over onto her side, embarrassedly repositioning her limp, useless legs along with her, still unaccustomed to the feeling of it. Come to think, she had remembered being unable to move her legs within the last few days, but then again she could barely move anything, so she made nothing of it.

She closed her eyes and knew it would be not at all challenging to fall asleep. In fact, that was the only thought that had time to race through her head before she fell asleep.

XoXoX

"She's just woken up four hours ago, Sirius, don't bombard her with questions yet!"

"It's my job, Molly, I'm sorry. You're lucky I'm here to do this. Scrigemour wanted to come himself. I managed to convince him that Moody and I would do."

“Alastor is going to interrogate my daughter?!”

“With the help of me and his newest apprentice. She’s just started training and hasn’t managed to become as cold-hearted yet. I’m very good friends with her, actually, in fact she’s my—some relation, the point is that we will keep Moody under control.”

This was the argument Ginny woke up to. She had had a restful night for the most part, except for waking up a few times after her subconscious had realized it couldn’t move her legs. Ginny was already on her side, so she rolled over onto her back, paying so much attention to her paralysis that she forgot why she had to take such measures in the first place. With a gasp of pain, she pushed herself into a sitting position. Luckily she weighed so little, or else she would have had more trouble than she did. She reached over onto the bedside table to get the controls for the bed, just for future reference.

Sirius and Molly both looked over to her. The former was wearing his work robes, and both looked very tired. Ginny rubbed her eye.

“What time is it?” She asked, her throat still dry. Molly gave her a goblet of water.

“Early. Go back to sleep.”

Ginny shook her head. “Why were you two arguing?”

They exchanged a look. “Ginny, two Aurors will be coming in about half an hour to ask you some questions. One of them...he’s been working a lot of years and is kind of blunt. But I will make sure his questions aren’t too upsetting so you can have minimal—well, so that you aren’t reminded of too much.”

With a determined look in her eyes, Ginny shook her head again. “I knew I would have to tell people what happened sooner or later. Better the sooner. I want to get it over with, without the looming knowledge that eventually I’d have to tell someone.”

Sirius smirked at Molly, with a distinct ‘I-told-you-so’ look on his face. Ginny yawned.

“Where’s everyone else?”

“Molly and I kicked them out.” Sirius said. Ginny found it odd that Molly had said only five words to her since she woke up and was letting Sirius answer all the questions. “They were being too annoying. Do you want to see them?”

Ginny smiled. “Yeah.”

XoXoX

In half an hour, just as Sirius had predicted, two Aurors, along with Arthur, came into the wing. There was a man and a woman. The woman had a heart-shaped face and bubble-gum pink hair. Her eyes were dark and twinkling, and she looked very kind for an Auror, who saw enough to dishearten the most optimistic person on the planet. But still, she was smiling widely. The man, however, was frowning. Ginny didn’t blame him. She was sure he had been lying in a bed similar to hers many times. He had a wooden leg, which clanked on the floor as he walked; several scars on his face and a chunk taken out of his nose. But perhaps the most interesting would be his eyes. One eye was normal, but the other was a vibrant, electric blue, perfectly circular, and moved independently of the other eye.

“Ginny Weasley?” The man growled. Ginny nodded silently. She learned quickly that if she nodded too deeply, she would hurt herself, so she had taken to nodding very sharply. “I’m Alastor Moody, this is my newest protégé, Nymphadora—” Ginny didn’t miss the woman scowling. “Tonks.”

“Tonks is the youngest Auror we have.” Sirius said. “Eighteen.”

Tonks grinned. She turned to Ginny. “How are you feeling?”

Ginny was forced to speak, something she didn’t want to do quite yet. “Okay.” She diverted from her usual answer: ‘fine.’ Over the full hour she had been awake, about a million people had asked her a million times how she was feeling.

"Are you up to answering some questions?" Moody asked. Tonks giggled.

"She already is, Mad-Eye."

Ginny smiled, and before Moody could respond, she spoke. "I know what he means, ma'am. And yes, I will answer your questions."

Tonks scowled again. "Just call me Tonks, Ginny. Anything else makes me make this face." She scowled again. Ginny laughed. Moody rolled his eyes, looking as though he regretted calling this...child an Auror, let alone his protégé. Ginny, however, enjoyed it.

One thing bothered her though. She looked around at her brothers and her sister and her mother. She didn't want them to hear what the Grangers did to her. But she didn't know how to kick them out.

Luckily, Sirius seemed to get it. "Ginny, since you are a minor your parent or guardian has to be present," He stressed the word present, and Ginny had an idea that her mother had been told strictly to not interrupt the questioning or to stop the Aurors from their business. "during the questioning...but would you like the rest of your family to step out?"

She looked around him to the rest of her family, who looked rather unabashed. "Could you? Sorry." She said. They all told her that they understood and left the room as one, Remus shepherding them out of the room. Molly took a seat next to the bed, looking fiercely at Sirius, looking as though she wanted to kill him. Arthur sat next to her, putting his arm around her.

"Ginny, we're going to get right to the point so we can get this over with, okay?" Sirius said.

"Sounds great."

Tonks took out a parchment and a quill, charming it to copy down everything that was said. She was at the same time heartbroken to see such a nice, young girl in such a position, and excited, because this was her first real assignment as a trainee Auror, practicing in a



mission with her mentor. As soon as the first question was asked, the former took complete control over the latter and she began to forget she was even an Auror at all, wanting nothing more than to give the girl a hug as she answered the question.

“When you were in the Grangers’ care—” Moody began in a growl, but Ginny interrupted him before he could finish the question.

“There was no care.” She said.

The Aurors all exchanged a look before re-asking the question. “When you were with the Grangers,” Moody said, waiting to be interrupted but was not. He continued, “did they feed you?”

“Not once.”

“Give you water?”

“Half a glass every other day.” Ginny said. “But I never drank it.”

“Why not?”

She looked at Moody, nodding to the flask on his belt. “For the same reason I’m guessing you carry that flask, sir.”

Tonks’s eyebrows rose, looking over at her mentor. “Constant vigilance, Mad-Eye. She’d make a good Auror.”

Moody ignored this and continued. “Did they supply you with a bed?”

Ginny shook her head.

“When you entered the hospital you showed signs of struggle and torture. Did they torture you and how?”

“Yes, and do I really have to say it?” She asked in a small voice.

Moody, Sirius, and Tonks all exchanged looks again. Ginny had her eyes closed, so she did not notice.

"That's the thing, Ginny." Sirius said. "You don't. Magic is a great thing, you know?"

Her eyes opened, recognizing Sirius's anxious voice. It's the same voice he used when he was forced to tell Molly that Harry had hurt himself because he had allowed his godson to perform dangerous tricks on his broom. "Sirius, what are you saying?"

"Well, since we have certain magic that we can do to—"

Ginny clenched her jaw and fists. "Spit it out Sirius!"

"You won't have to tell us for us to know what happened to you." Sirius said. "But..."

"But?"

A/n And...cliffie. Oh, god I'm evil. You can probably guess what they're gonna do though, it isn't exactly hard.

And aren't you all relieved to know Ginny's alive? She's alive and had a miraculous recovery to the point where somehow she is now completely coherent after a week of comatose near-death. If you knew anything about me you'd know I would never kill Ginny. I have trouble killing anyone. It's what I get for being a pro-peace, hoplophobic pacifist who's terrified of hurting people and hates violence. I have too big of a heart to kill anything, even fictional characters. In fact, I've only really killed (non-canon deaths, of course) in four stories out of twenty-four. That's not even seventeen percent. 'Course...I sobbed for nearly two days after writing each one...I'm not good at killing! Half of it was killing OCs that I made for the pure purpose of their death.

Monologue over. As usual, I love you all. Over two hundred reviews. Over three hundred alerts. Wow. Just wow.

Disclaimer! I am not J.K. Rowling, no matter how many people tell you differently.

“Since you’re too young to perform the magic needed to give a Penseive memory, we’ll have to use alternative methods.” Sirius told her. Arthur stood.

“NO!” He shouted, and even Molly looked at him like he was mental. “You will not use Legilimency on my daughter, I forbid it!”

“It’s our only choice!” Sirius shouted back. “It is the only evidence the Wizengamot will accept. Someone will go into her memories of the event and turn in their own Penseive memories of the invasion. I’m sorry, Arthur, it’s the only way.”

“What are you talking about?” Ginny asked. “What’s going on?”

Tonks sighed and put her hand on Ginny’s shoulder. The latter did not flinch, and Tonks was grateful. “Someone is going to come here and ask you to recall all your memories of the last nine weeks that you feel will make the greatest point. He will go into your mind with a magic called Legilimency and watch all the memories you think of, then present the Wizengamot with his memories of watching your memories. If you don’t resist, it won’t hurt.” She paused. “Physically.”

Ginny nodded, understanding. “Dad,” She began softly. “I want the Grangers to get what they deserve, and I know you do too. The only way for that to happen is for me to go through with this. I’m willing.”

XoXoX

“We know one thing from this.” Fred said optimistically.

“What would that be?” Charlie asked.

“Ginny’s a Gryffindor from her head to her heels.” George answered.

“We know two things from this.” Harry said. “She’s got a nice supply of magic in her.”

“We know three things from this.” Fred added. “She learned some words from George and me even though Mum yelled at us for hours every time we used one of them.”

“We know four things from this.” Bill said, putting his arm around Hermione. “Sometimes the apple falls from an orange tree.”

Hermione smiled weakly and sipped her tea. Everyone around her was halfway finished with their tea before she had even started hers. Ginny’s abduction brought up bad memories for Hermione, and she was going back to her ways from the Sir and Ma’am Chronicles. She hadn’t looked anyone in the eye for hours and hadn’t spoken since she woke up. It took about ninety-seven percent of her strong willpower to even crank out that little, teensy, measly smile for Bill. What was wrong with her?

Harry put his hand on her shoulder, and she pulled back out of habit, shutting her eyes and not even realizing until Harry started speaking what she had done.

“Open your eyes, Hermione.” He said. “Look at me.”

She let out a breath, lifted her head, and twitchily opened her eyes to see the whole table staring at her ruefully. Harry was looking her deep in the eye, his hand wrapped around the handle of his tea cup. He brought it closer to her and showed her the contents.

It was full.

He hadn’t been drinking it. He had been pretending. Hermione held her breath, closing her eyes again. She heard the sound of the cup being placed on the saucer and felt a warm hand on each of her cheeks. They pulled her face up.

“Open your eyes, Hermione. Please.”

Hermione opened her eyes, knowing deep down that she was being silly. She shivered and forced herself to keep eye contact with Harry.

“We love you, Hermione.” Harry said, launching into his speech. Whenever this happened, he said this speech, yet for some reason it seemed genuine and meaningful each and every time. “You are our sister, and we love you unconditionally. We will comfort you when you are sad, congratulate you when you achieve, and celebrate with you when you are happy. We will support you through anything you do. And when you do something we don’t like, we will tell you kindly, with as little yelling as possible and absolutely no violence. I have learned that, Hermione. You should learn it too.”

With that, she burst into tears, sobbing into Harry’s chest.

XoXoX

“Do you have any questions for us, Ginny?”

“Yes, sir.” Ginny said. It was after all the questioning had finished, and Ginny prided herself on having not broken down into tears. “When will the trial be?”

“As soon as possible.” Tonks said. She had grown furious listening to Ginny’s answers.

“Thank you, Ms. Tonks.”

Tonks shook her head. “Tonks, Ginny. Just Tonks.”

Ginny smiled. “Thank you, Tonks. And thank you too, Mr. Moody.”

Moody nodded, but Tonks shook her head. “You have no reason to be thanking us. This is our job. I should be thanking you for your cooperation. Those questions must have been hard to answer.”

Ginny did not reply. She stared into Tonks’s determined eyes. Moody pulled Tonks away from her, though, and the three Aurors—Sirius included—ushered Molly and Arthur out of the room to talk. Molly placed a kiss on Ginny’s cheek before leaving, and Arthur had done the same right after his wife.

She leaned her head carefully and slowly onto the pillow, moving the bed back slightly so she could lie down. Being in a week-long coma did nothing to stop her from being so exhausted, so she closed her eyes, and once again, she fell asleep within seconds.

XoXoX

"It's going to be a difficult trial." Moody said.

"Must you resort to Legilimency?" Arthur asked.

"It's our only choice, Arthur." Sirius replied. "If you want justice, she has to show us what happened."

Tonks was looking through the window on the door at Ginny. Moody turned to her.

"Nymphadora?"

It said a lot that she did not even respond to the fact that he called her by the dreaded name. "Why don't the dementors just Kiss them now?" She sighed. "She's the sweetest little girl I've ever met."

Sirius shrugged. "She's got a temper."

"Everyone has a temper, Sirius." Tonks said. Somewhere along the way, her hair had turned long, sleek, and black, but none of them knew when it had happened. "It's no reason to put someone in a hospital because they went off on you. Why can't we just throw them in prison now?"

"As much as we want that to happen," Moody said, his voice for some reason sounding less like a growl at that moment. "it doesn't work that way, Tonks."

She sighed.

"Tonks," Sirius said. "does your hair often change without your knowledge? You look like your mother."

“You sound like my mother.” Tonks retorted. She twisted his raggedy hair around her pointer finger. “And if you straightened this out you would look just like your favorite cousins.”

Sirius grimaced. “You had to bring her up?”

“I was testing to see who reacted worse to any mention of Auntie Bellatrix, you, my mother, or my father.”

“I never could beat Andromeda at hating those—things.”

“And you still haven’t.” She said absently, still looking through the window.

“Why don’t you take off the rest of the day, Tonks?” Moody said suddenly.

Tonks looked to him, confused. “I thought we were going to do some stealth training?”

Moody shrugged. “You can’t get any clumsier. We can put it off a while longer.”

Tonks nodded. “Thank you, sir.”

And she left, leaving a bewildered couple of Aurors and couple of Weasleys.

“What the hell was that?” Arthur asked.

“That was an eighteen-year-old Auror, that was.” Moody growled.

Suddenly, a scream sounded from the other side of the doors. They looked in through the window and saw Ginny thrashing—it looked rather strange, it being only above the waist—around on the bed.

XoXoX

—Start Dream Sequence, which conveniently enough is also a flashback—

She was in a dark, deserted room, with only the sound of a clock to keep her sane. Blood was splattered everywhere. She was aching in pain and her throat was dry with dehydration and her stomach was twisted in knots, begging her to be fed. But that didn't matter to them. He lifted her up by the collar of her overlarge shirt, pressing her against the wall forcefully. She resisted a scream. Her back hurt enough anyway. The woman next to the man punched Ginny hard in the stomach, bringing up blood and stomach bile into her throat. But she swallowed it down as the man banged her repeatedly against the wall. When he dropped her, she felt blood pouring out of the back of her head, and her vision blurred. She fought to remain conscious.

"Your family doesn't care about you. They haven't even come for you yet." The woman said.

"Oh, yeah. Because the greatest way to show you care for your child is to abduct and abuse their sister." Ginny retorted. The man kicked her.

"You are not at all related to Hermione!"

"Relation has nothing to do with blood!" Ginny cried, remembering the motto that the Weasleys had lived by since the Sir and Ma'am Chronicles. "Love is thicker than blood."

"Love is a worthless emotion."

"Why do you want your daughter back if you find it worthless to love her?" Ginny hissed. It sounded to outsiders like dramatic effect, but in fact she was incapable of taking any louder tone.

They simply kicked her in the head, causing her to fall out of consciousness. When she awoke in so much pain she could barely stand it, lying in a pool of her own blood, she tried as hard as she could to suppress a scream.

—End Dream Sequence/ Flashback—



The real-life Ginny, however, did nothing to suppress the scream. It poured out of her like tea from a kettle. She shrieked in pain and fear. Her family loved her. They had to. They had to.

She awoke in the arms of her mother, and her knowledge was declared true. Her family did love her. But why was she in her mother's arms?

The nightmare.

A tear rolled down her face, her whole body covered in cold sweat. She felt numb, and more so than just in her legs.

Soon, all her brothers and Hermione were coming in, and she noticed that Sirius and Moody were still there. She felt embarrassed, but carefully rested back onto the pillows, only gasping slightly at the pain. After so many weeks of being forced to keep her pain hidden, she could finally show when she was hurt, but she had regrets about this, knowing the effect it would have on her family.

She shook her head. "I'm fine. Just—just a dream."

"About?" Hermione asked bitterly.

Ginny matched her glare. "I can't say I recall."

"Ginny—" Ron began, but Ginny shook her head.

"It was just a dream." Ginny said quietly. "Dreams aren't always true."

XoXoX

That night, it took nearly two hours to say goodbye to Ginny. For the first time in their lives none of them wanted to go to Hogwarts. They all wanted to stay next to Ginny the whole day, staring at her and just basking in the fact that she was alive. It was as though they had never realized before they had a sister. When they had all disappeared through the fireplace, only Bill, Charlie, Arthur, and Molly were around her. She looked up at them.

“You didn’t tell them, did you.” Ginny said suddenly, and it was clearly not in the least bit a question, rather a statement. “You didn’t tell them that they are going to use Legilimency on me. Why didn’t you tell them?”

“They—” Molly began, but then had a flashback to a horrible event, which happened to be the impetus for this whole thing. “They were so excited. I didn’t want to dampen their spirits yet. I’ll tell them next weekend when they come.”

Ginny did not miss her mother’s short pause, and knew exactly what she had been about to say and why she didn’t. “You are the greatest mother in this world and every other, Mum. Don’t change just because of this.”

Molly nodded, biting her tongue to stop tears. She couldn’t speak at all. Arthur’s arm settled around her waist. Ginny managed to turn away from her and change the subject all in one, casual motion.

“Bill, Charlie, how long will you be staying in England?”

The two oldest brothers exchanged a look before turning back to their sister. “At least until you get better. Maybe longer.” Charlie said.

Bill nodded in agreement, but added one last note, “I might never go back to Egypt.”

Ginny’s face tensed. “I told Mum already. Don’t change just because of this. Time passes. Soon we’ll look back at this as we look back at the Sir and Ma’am Chronicles. This could be a good thing. The Grangers are going to get what they deserve, finally. They’ll never get out of jail after this.”

She didn’t even bother to comment on Charlie’s statement that they would stay at least until she got better. According to the Healers, it could be upwards of two years before she fully healed. The Healers had already told her they didn’t want to start physical therapy until she had fully recovered from her other injuries and returned to a healthy weight. She had come to the conclusion that she would not

be walking by the time she walked (well, wheeled) onto the Hogwarts Express ten months from then.

“How long am I going to be stuck in this hospital?” She sighed, looking around and feeling the overwhelming depressingness that seemed to float through the air, teasing her, laughing at her as she tried to move around freely, a feat she found incredibly difficult without mobility in her legs.

Molly lowered her eyebrows, narrowing her eyes. “As long as it takes for you to get better.”

Uh...duh? Ginny thought, because her question more revolved on how long it would take for her to get better, but she knew that nobody was quite sure of that answer. She simply nodded and rubbed her forehead, before realizing that it was covered in bandages for a reason. Immediately she lowered her hand from her head, cursing the Grangers. It had been well over fifteen hours since she woke up and still she couldn't manage to know the limits of all her injuries. She kept finding new pains, many of which she knew to be psychological.

“You should get some sleep, Gin.” Bill suggested, giving her a light kiss on her cheek, one of the few places where she was not severely bruised. She nodded and was very glad for this suggestion. The only sleep she had gotten in the last ten weeks was forced by unconsciousness. This, she had learned, was not her favorite kind of sleep.

“So should you four.” She added.

Charlie messed her hair slightly, a simpering smile on his face. “Nothing gets past you, eh, Gin?”

Ginny half-smiled. “I only learned from the best.”

And at that moment, though for the life of her Ginny could not know why, Molly burst into tears and ran from the room.

XoXoX

Fred and George decided to hold what seemed to others like a random celebration in the common room that night. They raided the kitchens for treats and drinks. To every Gryffindor's surprise, Percy had no objection to any of this. He conversed and laughed with others and, again to what seemed to others, blew off his prefect duties (McGonagall had in fact told another prefect to take over to allow Percy to enjoy the party, which she was fully aware of).

Hermione, especially, enjoyed the party. For the first time in a long time she found herself talking and laughing with the girls from her dormitory. She found them to be more than just gossiping, giggling girls, though the latter adjective applied to their manner even while talking about homework. Harry made several visits to her to make sure she was staying in the conversation and when she was not, did anything he could to include her. It very much irritated her, but she didn't care to think why he was doing this.

The twins made a spectacle of themselves. They launched numerous pranks and told more than a few jokes, as well as lit off a firework or two. Eventually, when the other prefect got back from her duties, she ordered everyone into their dormitories, because classes would be held the next day.

But before that, it was a great party.

The next day, nothing could get the Weasley kids down. Not even Draco Malfoy. Not even the issue of trying to find out who Nicholas Flamel was. They just floated along, smiles perennially on their faces. While they knew that Ginny was completely healed yet, they couldn't help but feel like she had. They made a million promises to themselves. These promises were promised to be kept, these promises were (promises). They included things such as:

I will always allow my sister to play Quidditch with us, no matter what.

I will always tell my sister that I love her, no matter who is listening.

I will always forgive my sister, no matter how badly she screws up.

I will always respect my sister and her feelings.

I will always remember the fear I felt when I found out she was missing.

So far, it was not in the least bit hard to keep these promises. They assured themselves that they would write to Ginny every single day. The twins—with the help of Harry, of course—planned an elaborate prank in her honor.

Yes, they were the happiest they have ever been.

XoXoX

“Mum! Mum!” Ginny yelled after her, throwing off the blankets to run after her. But when she tried to swing her legs to the floor, they didn’t move an inch. She stared at them like she had never seen them before and put her hands over her face. Her waist twitched, as if she was trying to move, but her legs stayed as limp as ever. She removed her hands to show a determined look as she tried to roll out of the bed, but Bill caught her and pushed her back into bed.

“Neither of us like it, but you’re not going to get anywhere by yourself.” He said.

“Get Mum back in here!” Ginny ordered them. “She knows bloody well that none of this is her fault! She knows she’s being ridiculous!”

“Ginny, calm down. She’s just sad. She’s upset. Don’t worry about it.”

“I can’t not worry about it, Bill, she’s my mother and she’s going to blame herself for something she bloody well knows isn’t her fault!”

“Really, Ginny, just calm down.” Arthur said. “Please, don’t get yourself worked up. I’ll go get Mum for you.”

So that’s what this is about, Ginny groaned in her mind. They just don’t want me to get ‘worked up.’ Bloody Grangers.

XoXoX

Harry won another Quidditch game for Gryffindor. They still hadn't found who Nicholas Flamel was. But it didn't matter. Nothing could get them upset.

Hermione, in fact, was so happy that she didn't tell Ron to "sod off" and do it himself when he asked for her to help with his homework. She actually wrote the essay for him, taking time to consider a different order and different wording than her own.

Percy did not chastise the twins for what had before been "childish pranks."

Because of this, they even did extra ones for him.

Ron had managed to pull his grades up (with a little help from Hermione) in his ecstasy.

They were happier than they could ever recall being. The school only noticed the significant change in them because of their insane depression the last nine weeks. But when asked why the sudden mood swing, they had all simply grinned, exchanged looks, and shared a laugh amongst themselves.

XoXoX

"Mum, come here, stop being silly." Ginny ordered. "You need to be reasonable. I'm here now. I won't be leaving again."

Molly looked like she did not believe her.

"Really, I've gotten to my quota of getting in trouble. You don't have to worry about me for a long time." She said, but that did nothing to settle Molly.

"You're hurt, Ginny."

Ginny took a thoughtful moment to plot out a reply. "Yes," She finally ended up saying. "I am. The wounds you see will heal, though. As for the ones you can't see...I think I know ten people who have the same kind." She took another moment, using this one to stare carefully into

her mother's eyes. "So don't go around calling the kettle black, Mrs. Pot."

A/n There you go. No cliffie. See, I'm not Hillary Clinton. I know when to stop and give up. I can sense when people are getting annoyed with me.

By the by, I'm having loads of trouble, for some reason, writing the bits with the brothers and Hermione at Hogwarts. Of course I'm going to assume you already know what happened in the first book, so I'm going to tell you right now that all that still will happen, but there won't be a chapter dedicated to it. There will only be mentions and knowledge.

Thank you all again for sticking with me. I'll have you know I am very strange. Sorry. Just had to tell you that, 'cause like ten people said it to me today just because I had an orange sticker on my forehead. O+

A/n I am so happy I can respond to reviews again. Reviews are one of my few sources of happiness after coming home from an annoying eighth grade day where my teachers are telling me to pay attention because I “have to think of high school” even though I’ve gotten a 4.0 every second of middle school and a day of Mr. Hall telling me to stop daydreaming and yelling at me for no reason at all besides that he hates me.

And I'm sorry that I haven't updated, I know I told some of you Friday, but here's my crazy story: on Monday, when I updated, I had just finished three weeks of antibiotics. Fun, right? Then, on Wednesday, I got a horrible cold. By Friday, the cold had turned into the flu and I couldn't stay awake or stop vomiting long enough to speak. That lasted ALL weekend. So I'm sorry.

On lighter topics, I love this chapter (it took me six tries to type the ‘p’ and not an ‘o’). It was so fun to write.

Ginny was only allowed back to the Burrow when her siblings were allowed back for the Christmas holiday. She was given a special wheelchair that operated on magic. It could hover, allowing easy access up stairs. It had heating and cooling mechanisms, and the seat could move to help her into chairs and her bed.

While the hovering was interesting, convenient, and really rather fun, Ginny was very glad her bedroom was on the first floor.

For the last few weeks, she had been seeing much too many of her relatives in the hospital, grieving over her injuries. She was very glad to have these few hours just with her parents before Bill and Charlie returned with her whole collection of siblings, fresh of the Hogwarts Express.

And she never thought she’d ever want to be alone over spending time with her siblings.

Her mother was in her bedroom making the beds when she got upstairs. At least...she thought it was her bedroom. She was pretty damn sure that had been her bedroom. But it looked rather different. It was the same colors, the same furniture, but all in different places.



“Did the door move or did I sustain head injuries so severe my memory is slipping at the ripe old age of ten?” Ginny asked. Molly turned and looked at her.

“I fixed it for you.” She said sheepishly. “So you could see the stars.”

Ginny blinked. She took a moment to react before she wheeled over to the bed and turned. Indeed, she could now see a clear view of the sky, obstructed only by the window, from her bed. Tears glistened in her eyes and she gestured her mother over and hugged her tightly.

“I’m sorry I’m so strange.”

Molly laughed. “I don’t care, Ginny.”

“There’s my girls.” A voice from the door said. “Are you doing okay?”

Ginny nodded. “Yeah,” she said in almost a whisper. “I’m great.”

XoXoX

Bill and Charlie returned with their brothers and sister three and a half hours later. Molly told them to be quiet and not bother Ginny, who was resting. Hermione said she wanted to check on her, and decided to kill two birds with one stone and bring her trunk into her—their, she remembered, she had taken advantage of the things she shared with her sister—bedroom at the same time.

The lights were off and the curtains drawn, making it very dark in the room. Hermione did not open the curtains or light the candles, not wanting to wake Ginny, so she walked through based on memory, but hit the desk instead of her bed. The noise made Ginny shoot straight up, looking ready to fight. When she realized what was going on, she fell back and sighed, pressing a button on the table next to her to light a candle. Hermione looked around to see an amazingly rearranged room.

“I know.” Ginny said. “She totally rearranged it so I could see the stars from my bed.” She tried to move to help Hermione get up from

her position of sprawled on the floor, before realizing it was useless.  
“Are you okay?”

“Yes, how about you?” Hermione asked, opening the curtains and walking over to Ginny, who shielded her eyes from the sudden flood of light and shrugged.

“I’ve been better, but not since September.” She hugged Hermione.  
“How’s school been going?”

“Great. How’s the Healers Orders?”

Ginny had been on strict orders all throughout her time in the hospital, and she was to continue with them until her physical therapy started Merlin knew when. She was on an incredibly precise diet to help gain healthy weight, as well as specified amounts of sleep each day. They gave her potions to help her sleep and potions to help the pain. It was driving her mental.

She groaned at Hermione’s question. “I would be fine if it weren’t for Mum watching me like a hawk. It’s like she thinks I don’t want to walk. Like I would find it fascinating to be in a wheelchair for the rest of my life.”

Hermione hugged her again. “I’m glad to have the old Ginny back.”

Ginny grinned. “Yeah, I mean, who would be the sarcastic, cheeky one around here if not me?”

They both looked at each other and answered at the same time.  
“Harry.”

Hermione smiled. “He’s not nearly as funny as you are. It’s hard to realize that you’re the dominating sarcastic power around here until you’re...not here.”

Ginny nodded. “I don’t think the Grangers cared much for my cheek.”

They both chuckled. “If I recall correctly, I don’t think they did either.”

The older sister suddenly felt a hand close in around hers. "I am astounded you managed to last eight years with them. I barely made it eight weeks. Just...you're brave, Hermione. You really are. Braver than I could ever be."

A smile morphed its way onto Hermione's sad face. "I was scared." She admitted. "I was so petrified of getting hurt that I actually obeyed all their ridiculous rules. That is how I lasted eight years. I wasn't bold like you were, I didn't fight back. They liked that. They didn't hurt me as much if I gave in. Sometimes I would go a month or two without getting hurt, and I would eat and drink enough to live. I really was lucky, if I think of it."

"Lucky compared to what?" Ginny asked. "Lucky compared to those starving, orphan Muggle kids in Africa? Yes. Lucky compared to Harry? Yeah, probably. But lucky compared to anyone else? Probably not. There were probably about only five percent of kids in the whole world, Muggle and Wizarding, that you are luckier than. So don't give me this crap that you were lucky. No one who has to spend two minutes with those monsters you called parents is lucky, let alone eight years. Abuse is more than physical, Hermione. Just because you couldn't always see the injuries they caused doesn't mean they weren't there."

There was a soft knock at the door and Molly walked in. She saw Hermione and Ginny sitting on the bed together and closed the door behind her.

"When did you wake up, Ginny?"

Ginny smirked. "I'm not the only one who was confused by the new layout." She gestured to the room around her. Molly turned slightly red.

"I like it." Hermione said, standing up. "I think I could get used to it easily."

Molly smiled. "I have dinner ready."

Ginny nodded. "We'll meet you down there in a second."

At this, Molly left, recognizing the dismissal. Ginny sighed and looked determinedly at the wheelchair. She reached out and brought it close to the bed. Hermione hopped over to help her, but Ginny shook her head.

"I need to do this myself." She said.

After a minute and a half's effort of positioning herself, Ginny finally transferred from the bed to the wheelchair, knowing she would have incredibly upper body strength by the end of it all. With Hermione in tow, she went down to the kitchen, where the rest of her family along with Remus was crowded. After a round of hugs, the food was served.

Sirius showed up about halfway through, gave Harry a kiss on the forehead, and sat down at the table.

After dinner, Ginny did not fail to notice that he pulled aside her parents and told her something. Nor did she miss the look that Molly shot at her, telling her that something was wrong with something. As if the rest wasn't a giant arrow pointing to them, Sirius slipped Molly something. But before Ginny could ask about it, Percy asked her a question.

"Have you had any more nightmares, Ginny?"

She turned and saw all her brothers staring in between her and him. Clearing her throat she simply shrugged. "I-I just had one or two more, but it's nothing much to worry about."

"Uh, Ginny, why don't I put you to bed?" Molly said out of the blue. Ginny knew full and well she wasn't going to be preparing her for sleep, rather talking to her about whatever Sirius's news had been. Fred groaned.

"C'mon, Mum, we just got home five hours ago. We want to talk to our baby sister."

Ginny shot them a look. "I'm not your baby sister." She said, but then shrugged. "Besides, if I get all my sleep tonight, I won't have to take that ridiculous nap they've scheduled me to."

"Yes, that's true." Molly said. "Let's go, I'll give you your potion."

Molly had been trying to discourage the use of the potion. This really told Ginny something was wrong. What was so bad about that she had to learn it now, and that she had to take the potion to fall asleep? What was the thing Sirius had given her? Ginny was starting to get worried. She unlocked her wheelchair and rolled forward, following Molly. At the stairs, though, Molly stopped and waited for her.

"What's wrong, Mum?" Ginny asked.

Her mother was wearing a small smile. "Nothing. How about I carry you up the stairs?"

"What?" Ginny laughed.

"Like I used to when you were little and would fall asleep downstairs. I would carry you to bed and tuck you in. Sometimes I would just watch you sleeping. You were so cute when you slept." She still smiled. "Let me carry you."

"Mum, I'm too—" Ginny stopped, her mouth hanging open. She was too what? Two hundred and some-odd bones? That was definitely not what she was planning to say. She changed it. "W-What about the chair?"

Molly shrugged. "I'll bring it up later."

Ginny knew her mother loved her. She knew she was her mother's last baby, and the only daughter she had brought into this world. With this came the burden of having things happen occasionally, things where her mother would ask her to sit on her lap or let her read her a story before bed or sit on the counter and help her bake cookies and let her lick the spoon afterward. But things like this had never happened. She figured it was a combination of being the last one and

the fact that she had just gotten in such an accident that put her in a position where Molly felt she needed to help her. So Ginny sighed.

"If you think you can."

Molly lifted Ginny up and the latter fastened her arms around her mother's neck.

"You okay?" Ginny asked. Molly was beaming, though.

"As long as you are."

Ginny laughed. "This is more fun than flying in that chair."

XoXoX

"Dad, how really is Ginny?" Ron asked. "I know she's lying to us."

"If so, she's lying to us, too." Arthur said. "She hasn't told us anything except how great she's feeling and the occasional sarcasm. She tries not to go too far, so she doesn't upset her mother, but she can't just outright stop. It's the only way she can really...let it pass through her."

Fred rolled his eyes. "She's got all permission to be cynical and sarcastic."

"Doesn't she know that?" George finished.

"Imagine Molly if Ginny took it too far." Harry said.

They all had the same image in their minds: Molly, moving her hands up to cover her tear-covered, splotchy face, and turning to run out of the room, Ginny sitting in a wheelchair, looking dumbfounded for a few seconds before going after her. Arthur shuddered at the thought of Molly that night after all that had happened. Hermione sighed thinking of Ginny's outburst afterward. She never yelled—she was good at that—but it had a rather Dumbledore-like effect when she didn't yell. One could tell she was angry, but it just made it worse that she seemed so calm and patient.

“Hate to see that fight.” Ron mumbled, shooting a look at Hermione, whose faraway eyes told them better than a billboard that she wasn’t paying attention.

“Why doesn’t Ginny ever yell at me?” Hermione inquired softly. They all jetted their eyes to face her.

“No one here wants to yell at you, Hermione.” George told her. Fred took liberty to add, “We have no reason to.”

“But she must get the feeling where she needs to yell. She has to. When I get angry, I yell at her. When she gets angry, she never yells.”

They all shrugged. “Maybe it’s not you she wants to yell at.” Harry mused. “And she just doesn’t want to take it out on the wrong person.”

XoXoX

“Mum, really, what’s going on?” Ginny asked quietly. Molly turned, a big, fake smile on her face and a goblet full of potion in her hand.

“Nothing, dear.”

“Don’t lie to me, Mum, and I won’t lie to you.” Ginny said. “That was our deal. Now why did you suddenly want to relive the past and carry me up the stairs and why are you giving me a red potion when the one I usually take is sky blue?” She asked, looking into the goblet her mother gave her. Turning her gaze up to her mother, she held her eye strong and demanding, yet soft and comforting. “I saw Sirius talk to you earlier, Mum. What’s going on?”

Molly sighed. “Your Legilimency appointment has been moved to tomorrow evening. This is a potion that will help you gather your thoughts of the past few weeks so you don’t have to strain your memory.”

Ginny cocked her head to the side. “You were planning on telling me about this change...when?”

She sighed again. "I was going to talk to your father about it and tell you in the morning. I-I don't know what I was thinking. I'm—"

"It's okay, Mum." Ginny cut her off without even knowing if she was going to apologize. "It doesn't even matter any more. Tomorrow I'm going to show them all my memories about my stay. I've already got a few stored up. Real good ones, too. Ones that'll assure the Grangers a prison cell in hell."

Molly gave her a short, reprimanding look before breaking into a smile. "You can joke about this, Ginny. That's what I missed most. I-I kept wanting to wake up to find you next to me, telling me jokes and being sarcastic about the whole thing just so I would have something to distract me."

Ginny reached over and stroked her mother's cheek. "I'm here now, Mum. Don't think about when I wasn't if you don't have to."

XoXoX

When Ginny woke up the next morning, she stretched, rubbed her eyes, and nearly fell out of bed. Two grinning faces were staring down at her.

"Morning, Imp." One of the twins said. Her mind was too scattered, her thoughts were too emotional, and it was much too early to know which one it was. She hadn't slept well the night before for reasons she didn't want to tell anyone.

"I-Imp?" Ginny repeated. "You haven't called me 'Imp' since I was eight."

The twins both shrugged. One of them—the one of the right, farther from the wall, she was pretty sure that was George, for some reason 'Fred' and 'wall' were related to her—spoke. "We were thinking of it last night, and how you got the name in the first place."

Ginny sat back. "When I was six and got so angry at Ron and Percy that I leaked magic and the treehouse caught fire and collapsed?"



“We were going to call you Pyro, but Mum objected.”

“Why were you thinking about that?”

The twins exchanged a look, and then the one sitting closer to the wall—that one was definitely Fred, he had the weird freckle on the cartilage of his ear that Ginny used to distinguish them during the Sir and Ma’am Chronicles, back when she couldn’t tell their voices apart—said, “It’s a long story.”

Suddenly another person joined them in the room, this one spoke before coming fully in. “Fred, George, what’s going on? You’ve been in here for like half an hour.”

“She was sleeping.” George told Hermione.

“We didn’t want to wake her up.”

“What’s going on?” Ginny asked.

Hermione sighed. “It’s time for lunch.”

“Lunch?” Ginny repeated. “What exactly happened to breakfast? Did I miss some memo where we all decided lunch is superior to breakfast and therefore should be eaten before it? Do I get to have those noontime waffles I’ve been wanting?”

The twins beamed in mirth and triumph while Hermione crossed her arms. “You don’t remember, do you?”

Ginny cocked an eyebrow. “I can’t say I do. But I don’t like that look. Fred, George, out.”

They looked at her for a second before she repeated the message silently, with her eyes only. That always tended to frighten them, so they left, leaving their sisters alone.

“What are you talking about, Hermione?”

“You kept waking up last night screaming and crying. I’m surprised none of your brothers heard you.” Hermione told her. “Molly gave you a Dreamless Sleeping Draught and you were asleep in a second. She let you sleep through breakfast, just telling us all that you needed your rest.”

Ginny blinked. “Well...I guess I do remember. But I still don’t remember the nightmares. Why would I—?” It all crashed down on her like an ocean wave on the warm sand. Sirius. The potion. The appointment with some heartless Auror. The Legilimency. She would have to go through that today. Did none of them know?

After Ginny’s words, Molly had told all her sons and her daughter about the Legilimency that had to be performed on her. She had not even hesitated, not even when Ron asked what it was. It was just one of those things, Ginny supposed. She hoped it didn’t last, because that was not something she could get used to.

Positioning herself, Ginny got into her wheelchair, which was now sitting next to her bed, her mother true to her word as she was.

She turned to Hermione and smiled. “Ready?”

Hermione nodded and stood. Ginny noticed she had had her eyes closed. Her eyes held a look of somnolence in them when she first opened them.

“What wrong, Hermione?” Ginny asked, before even realizing what it all meant. “You didn’t sleep, did you? And I...” Her voice trailed off and she shook her head. “You didn’t have to do that, Hermione.”

“I’m your big sister, it’s my job.” Hermione said immediately. “C’mon, let’s go before Molly comes up.”

XoXoX

Molly was talking silently with Arthur and Sirius in a distant corner when they came in. Ginny noticed the angry look on her mother’s face and Sirius’s upset one.

“Mum, what’s going on?” Ginny asked as she passed them. Molly sighed and turned to face her.

“Dear,” Molly began, but Ginny’s eyes widened and her mouth opened slightly.

“I-I don’t like that voice.” She said quietly. Molly sighed again.

“Your appointment isn’t just today.” Molly said. “It’s the hearing, too.”

Ginny leaned back, tilting her head slightly. “Do they know?” She asked under her breath. Molly shook her head. “Were you planning on telling them?”

“Of course.” Molly said. “I just didn’t think it would have to be so soon.”

Her daughter nodded in understanding and moved over to her place at the table, the only place without a chair already at it. Molly cleared her throat and turned to her noisy children, trying to hide her fear. She felt Ginny’s hand close around hers and felt a little more confident. During this whole thing, Molly noticed, Ginny had ended up being the mother to her whole family, the strong one that they can fall back on. And she was the one that went through it all. Irony was strange sometimes.

“Um...I need to tell you all something.” She said. They all looked up at her, confused at her nervousness. “Ginny—Ginny’s hearing is today. It got moved to this evening.”

Bill lifted an eyebrow and leaned back. “So...Legilimency...”

“She’s—” Charlie squeezed out before cutting himself off.

“Aurors...” was Ron’s concern.

“The whole Wizengamot...” Percy thought of.

The twins couldn’t make a joke, and Harry and Hermione couldn’t make a sound.

"I'll be fine." Ginny assured them all, smiling. "Really. Nothing will go wrong. It'll just take a few minutes," It was going to take hours. She knew it. "and then it will be over, and I'll just have to listen to the verdict. After what I'm going to show them, that should probably take a matter of minutes."

"Are you ready for this, Ginny?" Hermione asked.

Ginny smiled wider. "This is important, Hermione. This has to do with more than me. It has to do with a lot of people. Don't ask if I'm ready, because we all know it doesn't matter right now."

While it sounded ridiculous on the surface, all of them, somewhere deep down inside, knew that was true. Hermione knew she was right even on the surface. She wasn't ready to hear all the things that had been done to her.

A/n Are you ready? Because I. Am. Not. It's gonna make me cry to have to write all the memories.

A/n Hellos! I want you to imagine something...think of the unluckiest person you know...now multiply by five...THAT'S ME! So I get off the antibiotics, I get the cold, it turns into the flu, blah blah yeah. Wednesday, I go to school, and I get hit in the face more times than I could count during basketball. No big deal. That always I happens. I can't take five steps without getting hit in the face. But then yesterday, I get hit in the face with a backpack. A middle school backpack that weighed like ten, fifteen-ish pounds. Guess what? I get a concussion! I stayed home from school Friday, and I should be all better by Monday. Oh, and when I went to urgent care, they showed me my record to say I've been in for some reason six times since the beginning of the year. Fun.

On another note, the chapter! Since I was too damn lazy to just create characters of my own, all the "interrogators" are the same as for Harry's hearing, 'cept for one change.

Ginny patted Hermione's hand reassuringly before going to the Ministry and going into the room with her father in tow. The Wizengamot—or at least, the people she assumed to be the Wizengamot—was still filing into seats at that point. Moody, Sirius, and Tonks were all in the small clearing in front of the bleachers. Ginny took a breath and wheeled up to them. They pointed to a place where she and her parents could wait for her testimony and the dreaded Legilimency to begin.

"Let the court of the Wizengamot begin. Interrogators Cornelius Oswald Fudge, Minister of Magic; Amelia Susan Bones, Head of the Department of Magical Law Enforcement; Albus Percival Wulfric Brian Dumbledore, Chief Warlock of the Wizengamot." The man in the highest chair, whom Ginny knew to be the Minister of Magic, read off. She felt a surge of hope when Dumbledore's name was called, but nonetheless looked at the ground and stopped really paying attention. Her head snapped up, though, when the doors opened and two Muggle police officers—who she knew wouldn't remember this after four hours from then—were revealed, pulling along two people.

Ginny froze, staring at the Grangers as they were put into chairs and bound with magical chains. Her chest tightened and a big lump developed in her throat. She could barely breathe.

“Witness, Ginevra Molly Weasley.”

She gulped and went down back to where the three Aurors were standing. Sirius put a hand on her shoulder as he saw her glance anxiously to the Grangers.

“They can’t hurt you. They can’t hear you; they barely even know what’s going on.” He assured her, but she did not become any less tense.

“Ginny, Mad-Eye and I will both be using Legilimency.” Tonks said. Ginny felt a bubble of concern pop like it had never been there. Some heartless Auror wouldn’t be performing the spell on her. It would be Tonks and Moody, two Aurors that she was familiar with. “Like I said, if you don’t resist, it won’t hurt. The two of us is just to assure we get the same memories. Please, if you would, think of the strongest memories from your time with the Grangers, the ones that you think will help most.”

She nodded and closed her eyes.

“Collect them.” Tonks said, and Ginny did. “And now force them to the front of your mind.”

Ginny nodded again. The room was deathly silent, except for the occasional rattle of chains as one of the Grangers tried to escape, only followed by a grunt as they found themselves burned or shocked by the chair and the chains tighten around them.

“We’re going in now.”

What seemed like a hundred memories flashed between the three of them. Tonks had to force herself to keep going. Memory after memory she wanted to get out and strangle the Grangers and hug Ginny until she could barely breathe. How did a ten-year-old get through this? How did those people sleep at night knowing they did this to a little girl?

When they came out, Ginny's knuckles were white, gripping the handles of her wheelchair. She was still very pale from the weeks of darkness and no sun, but her face was noticeably pale, her freckles popping out like crayon and the bruises that still remained like paint. It seemed her grip on the arms of her chair were the only thing that kept her from falling to the ground. Unshed tears glistened in her eyes and she melted into her parents when her mother caressed her hair and her father squeezed her shoulder. Tonks and Moody both glared dangerously at the Grangers.

"Aurors Moody and Tonks, please provide your memories." Fudge said. "In the meantime, Miss Weasley, if you would answer some questions, it would be helpful."

Ginny nodded, trying to regain her breath.

"Did the Grangers assault you during your time there?"

No, these bruises are just decorative. "Yes, sir. Numerous times."

"These left you disabled?"

Nope. The wheelchair? Yeah, that's all for poops and giggles. "Yes." She said carefully, as if fearing there might be some other motive behind his question.

"Did they feed you?"

Yes, actually, they did, the Healers hold for all my family the fear we will fly out an open window if the breeze picks up. "No, sir, they did not." Ginny spoke vehemently, trying to keep her anger and irritation from becoming tangible as the questions continued.

"Any means of torture?"

Damn. I saw this coming. She sighed and nodded. "Yes, sir."

They waited in vain for her to say something else. "Yes?" Fudge finally said, impatient.

“Fire.” was the only word that came out of her mouth at the time.

“Fire?” Madam Bones reiterated.

Ginny nodded, shaking with fear. “And blood.”

They were silent.

“And they—they tried to—they made me think I was going to die—I wanted to die—it was—”

“What happened, Miss Weasley?” Fudge asked. Ginny’s eyes were blank and unfocused, staring at the cauldron which the Aurors’ memories were being added to, though the process had stopped upon hearing her reaction to the question. But they could all tell her eyes saw nothing but the memories.

“Where does one begin?” She mumbled, her jaw clenched, trying to keep tears out of her eyes, but they were as stubborn as she was.

“If Aurors Moody and Tonks hurry,” a calm voice interrupted. “you may not have to begin at all.”

Ginny’s eyes snapped up to Dumbledore, as well as every person in the hall. She nodded, looking down at the tile and chewing on her lip to prevent tears from falling.

“If everyone would please turn their attention to the cauldron.” Fudge said. Ginny hesitantly looked up, knowing what was going to be seen but still terrified.

“If we don’t see our daughter, you don’t see your family. Understand me?” Mr. Granger’s figure was leaning over a bleeding, silhouette Ginny above the cauldron, saying these words. It morphed into a wretched scene.

Mr. Granger threw her into the wall, stepping on her hand soon after. Mrs. Granger walked up to her, several matchbooks in her hand. Ginny’s eyes narrowed.



“What the hell do you think you’re doing with those?” She breathed.

The woman smirked maliciously. “Your hair seemed so fiery in the light. It’s so dark in here, and I miss the fire of your hair.”

They all knew exactly what she was going to do, but the memory continued.

She struck the match against the floor and twirled it in her fingers as the fire grew. Soon it was nearing Ginny’s head, but it missed her hair and started to flare under her chin. But the fire itself did not hit her skin, just the heat radiating off of it. Suddenly, the match was on the floor, extinguished in a puddle of water from the glass that had spilt, and Ginny’s hand was just past where the match had been blazing in the woman’s hand. Mrs. Granger’s eyes narrowed as she reached into the matchbook and struck another match.

“You little bitch.”

“You big bitch.”

Everyone in the room had wide eyes, and more memories of abuse and fire flashed through before more evidence of torture came.

They had Ginny pinned against the wall, blood trickling down the side of her head. Her eyes were covered by a blindfold, and she was hyperventilating. Mrs. Granger had a finger to her forehead, and blood was dripping down from her fingertip onto Ginny’s face. Mr. Granger seemed to be making sure the blood kept falling from Ginny’s temple by occasionally swiping it with a razorblade. The blade seemed not to hurt her, or rather it was so frightening not to know where the blood was coming from that she couldn’t think long enough to process pain.

“They still aren’t here.” Mr. Granger hissed into her ear.

“They’ll come.” Ginny told them through gritted teeth, and tasted blood seep into her mouth as she did so.

“It’s been a long time.”

"The longer I stay here, the longer Hermione is away from you people. So I sincerely don't give a damn."

They dropped her, her head knocking painfully against the floor.

"Your family doesn't even care about you." Mrs. Granger sneered, her favorite line. Ginny laughed, making them scowl and kick her.

"This is your idea of caring, isn't it? Your idea of caring is beating the hell out of whomever stands in the way of beating the hell out of your daughter? If that's caring then I think I'm glad my family doesn't care. They love me. You feel no love."

"Love is worthless."

More memories. Memories of Mr. Granger sending an elbow to the small of Ginny's back and forcing all his weight onto one foot and stepping on her back, both repeatedly, which probably caused her to be paralyzed. Memories of things being shoved into her mouth and over her nostrils, causing a panic where she could not breathe before she managed to spit out whatever was in her mouth and thrash around enough to get them off her as they pinned her to the floor. Memories of them stabbing her with a steak knife. Memories of being thrown into a clock and the glass cutting into her neck. Memories painful enough to watch, let alone experience. Ginny could feel the room grow more silent and tense, and she could feel her parents shaking at her side as they tried to comfort her without hurting her.

They saw the nightmare she had first had in the hospital, as well as several other nightmares she had. All the memories also included verbal threats.

When the string of memories ended much later, and the picture of Ginny vomiting blood fell into the Penseive, the whole hall was silent for near ten minutes before Dumbledore stood up.

"All in favor of sentencing the Grangers to the Dementor's Kiss and a lifetime in prison on charges of child abuse, abduction, torture, threats, and mistreatment and assaulting of a minor?" He asked. Almost all of

them raised their hands, save one, who stood. She was wearing a fluffy pink cardigan and looked like a hideously ugly toad.

“We need to hear the testimony of the Grangers!” She shrieked. Ginny stared up at her. She did not feel angry, like she thought she would, but rather surprised herself by feeling sorry for the poor toad woman. Not only did she lack any sense of fashion, but also a heart and a soul. Perhaps the dementors had Kissed her.

“There is no possible way they could stop any of us from believing this was how those weeks were for Miss Weasley, Madam Umbridge.” Madam Bones said. “Unless of course you’d like to challenge and tell us all you believe Miss Weasley is lying to us.”

Ginny was looking at the floor again, silent and not really paying attention. But she did hear a huff and some quiet mumbling, making her think Umbridge had sat down.

“Dismissed.” Fudge said. “Please take the prisoners to the proper place.”

A clanking on the floor told Ginny that Moody had set to the job. There was a hum of noise as the members of the Wizengamot all stood and started to collect their things. As they walked out, they all shot worried, concerned looks at Ginny, and some even went as far as to apologize for what happened.

“It’s over now,” was all she ever said in response.

When they were all alone, Molly flung herself on Ginny, bombarding her face with kisses, mumbling incoherent things to her as tears streamed down her face. Arthur was behind his daughter, his arms around her shoulders.

“I wanna go home,” Ginny whispered. “Please?”

They nodded and helped her to the lobby of the Ministry, and she noticed Sirius following them from a distance. She didn’t mind. Molly Shrunk her daughter’s wheelchair and Apparated away with it in her pocket, and just seconds after, Arthur Apparated away with Ginny in

his arms. When they got back to the Burrow, they went through the front door rather than the back, knowing Remus would be with all the sons in the kitchen. Arthur laid Ginny on the couch, where her tears ran freely down her face, and he and Molly, after setting her wheelchair next to her, walked into the kitchen.

Any noise there was in the kitchen stopped as soon as Sirius and the Weasley matriarch and patriarch entered the kitchen. They all looked up at them.

"They were sentenced to the Kiss and a lifetime in prison." Sirius said. "We don't know if they decided Muggle or Azkaban, though."

"H-How is Ginny?" Percy asked quietly.

"She's upset." Molly sighed, then looked over at her other daughter. "Hermione? Are you okay?"

Hermione was staring out the window, gulped, and let out a broken chuckle. "It was here that I learned they were out of prison."

"Hermione—"

"What did they do to her?" She whispered the question through gritted teeth, her face suddenly serious. Her eyes were closed, her face turned down, and it was obviously very hard for her to say even those few words out loud. Without even waiting for an answer, though, she jumped up and walked out, going into the living room, knowing that first, she couldn't keep herself in that room with so many of her superiors in age around her, and second, that she needed to hear to from Ginny.

"Ginny." She breathed. Ginny's eyes opened.

"Yes?" Ginny asked before even seeing who it was. Upon seeing Hermione, she groaned. "Hermione, I really don't want to talk about it."

"It was my parents, Gin." Hermione whispered. "And you're my sister. I have a right."

"No, Hermione," Ginny said. "You don't. Yes, I am your sister. But I'm the sister of seven other people."

"But they are my parents."

"Wrong again, Hermione." She stated. "They were your parents. But that means nothing. They don't love you, Hermione, they think love is worthless."

"B-But they went through all that—"

"For themselves. Because they couldn't stand to know someone else was raising their daughter. Only they knew how to raise their daughter. But they hit you, Hermione. They starved you. You went through years of abuse because of them, and not even a single cell in their body loves you in the least bit. They don't even love each other. Do you really, really, really want to call those people your parents? Because if you do, then I would be glad to tell you everything that happened. I don't believe Harry hasn't already told you all of this."

Hermione bit her lip. "He has."

"Then maybe it'll be easier to get into your skull." She vehemently mumbled. "If there is no love, how can you call them your family?"

She sighed and turned her head, and Hermione did a double take. That, that—that inquiry was so familiar...it was almost verbatim what Ginny had told Hermione the morning after the latter arrived to the Burrow, concerning almost the same thing, right after Hermione learned she was a witch. Albeit, it was in a much harsher tone than Ginny could have ever pulled off in the Sir and Ma'am Chronicles, but nonetheless.

"You've six brothers...what else can you do?" She whispered quietly.

"I've seven brothers. And what are you talking about 'what else can I do?'"

“When you were five and I just came here. You said that. I told you that you were very observant, and you said you had six brothers, and there was nothing else you could do. Right after you asked me that same question. ‘If there’s no love in your house, how can you call them your family? How can you call that place your home?’”

Ginny turned her head back to look at Hermione. “You remember all that?”

“Those words are the reason I’m here. Had you not said those words...I never would have repeated them to the judge, and I never would have believed that my parents didn’t love me.”

She looked at her older sister, incredulous. “It was six in the morning and I was barely six years old. You’ve lived the last four years based on those words? It was the Sir and Ma’am Chronicles, Hermione; I didn’t even know the difference between ‘sick’ and ‘hurt.’ I thought my mother’s kisses could heal any ailment. You actually took my words into careful consideration?”

“You were smart. Really smart. Smarter than I ever was.”

“Are you kidding? I could barely read when I was seven, you were reading Charles Dickens. You knew all these things I didn’t.”

“But you have a view on the world I could never dream of having.”

“Yeah, it’s called I’m the youngest of nine and no one will let me breathe funny without freaking out. I understand human behavior. It’s not exactly a difficult thing to learn.”

“It is for me.”

Ginny closed her eyes, realizing that she was now far from the original topic, and therefore safe. She lost track of the conversation after that.

XoXoX

“Should we go?” Arthur asked.

"Give them a chance alone." Molly said contritely. She knew she should have thought about Hermione more the last few weeks.

"Hermione is going to be okay, Molly." Harry said, as if reading her mind. "You've done nothing wrong. She's just confused."

"How are we supposed to do this?" Charlie sighed suddenly. "How are we supposed to—what did they do to her, Mum?"

"Charlie, I just went through over an hour of my daughter's memories about abuse and torture, all I want to do is hug her and give her a lifetime supply of ice cream, anything that will help her." Molly sobbed, folding her arms on the table and resting her head on them.

"Molly, why don't you go upstairs and rest?" Arthur suggested.

"What about dinner?"

"I'll cook." Remus said. "Go rest, Molly, you need it. Arthur, you too."

They were about to argue, but at once all their sons told them to go upstairs and not give a second thought to them. Molly needed little convincing, and Arthur was eager to get his wife to sleep, deciding to just join her. When they left, all the sons turned to Sirius.

"What were in those memories? What did those monsters do?" Ron demanded.

Sirius sighed. "Well—"

"Wait," Bill said. "Shouldn't we wait for Hermione?"

"Ginny better tell Hermione herself." Sirius said.

"That bad?" Harry observed.

"That bad." Sirius said, and he proceeded to tell the tale of what he had seen.

XoXoX

“Ginny, Hermione?” Molly said, knocking softly on the door to the living room. “We’re going to get some rest. You should too, Gin.”

“I’ll try.” Ginny said. “I just—I want to talk to Hermione about some things.”

“O-Okay, dear.” Molly said, giving her a kiss on the cheek. “Have a good night sleep. Your potion is next to your bed if you need it. I love you.”

“Love you, Mum.” She said as Molly moved to say goodnight to Hermione. “Love you, Dad.” She added to Arthur as he hugged and kissed her.

“If you need us, you know where to find me.” He said, stressing the last word slightly. “Love you.”

When they left, Hermione tilted her head. “What did you want to talk to me about?”

Ginny sighed. “You—you wanted to know a long time ago how the Grangers tortured me.” She recalled. “And—I think it’s time you found out.”

“Are—are you sure?”

The younger girl nodded, looking at her sister determinedly. “You deserve to know. After what you did last night...”

“I did that because I’m your sister.”

“You did that because you’re a great sister.” Ginny said, not caring if she was interrupting her or not. “And I should be a great sister back.”

Hermione nodded, listening attentively. Ginny knew she couldn’t stall any longer. It was near impossible to stall Hermione when she was in full listen mode.



She bit the edge of her bottom lip and didn't start talking until her teeth slid off. "They held matches up to my skin. Not close enough to burn me. But close enough that I could feel the heat coming off it, close enough where I could barely breathe, close enough to the point where I almost wanted them to burn me, just to get it over with. It was worse than if the fire was actually touching my skin. It was horrible. They know what they're doing."

When she shot Hermione an almost questioning look, Hermione piped up, "They never did anything like that to me." She tilted her head again. "D—what else did they do?"

"They covered my eyes and...I didn't know until I saw the memories, but they made me bleed, and then they let their own blood drip on my skin, so I didn't know whose blood it was. It was scary...I didn't know what was happening, I didn't know that it wasn't all my blood, I didn't know where it was coming from, but it was on my skin, and—" She stopped, looking down at the couch. Her hair fanned over her face, so Hermione couldn't see her tears falling. "Have you ever realized how slowly blood flows?"

Hermione knew exactly how slowly blood flowed. It seemed to take a century for it to fall down your face. Granted, when the Grangers did that to her, they didn't make her bleed, they trusted on existing injuries. So she imagined it would be more overwhelming if you were being made bleed.

"And they—they would c-cover my mouth and my nose so I—so I couldn't breathe. They would h-hold me down to the g-gr-ground and I—and I couldn't breathe and—" She couldn't speak anymore. She buried her face into Hermione's shoulder and sobbed.

Hermione held her sister like a daughter. The whole time this had been going on, not once had Ginny broken down like this. Not even after the nightmares, Ginny didn't cry this hard. But she was sobbing now.

And not an ounce of her, not a cell in her body, not a yoctometre of her being blamed her.

“Ssh, Ginny, it’s over now, okay? They’re in prison, they’re going to get Kissed.”

Ginny ripped her head from Hermione’s shoulder. “That doesn’t matter! They didn’t have souls to begin with; the Kiss will do nothing to them!”

Hermione looked at Ginny like she had never seen her before. Which really, she hadn’t. Ginny was so angry, she was actually yelling at her.

“Just because they’re going to jail doesn’t erase what they did! They can’t hurt anyone else, but they’ve already hurt a lot of people! No one with a soul can hurt their own daughter, no one with a soul can be so merciless and unfeeling when paralyzing and torturing a ten-year-old!”

“This is good, Ginny, keep yelling.” Hermione egged her on. Ginny looked thunderstruck.

“What?”

“Keep yelling, you’ll feel better.”

“You—what are you talking about, Hermione?” Ginny asked softly.

“You never yell.” Hermione said. “I began to wonder if you ever did.”

“Of course I yell.” Ginny said. “But I don’t like to yell around you. The Grangers yelled at you. We aren’t the Grangers.”

“Ginny,” Hermione interrupted. “I know. You can yell, it won’t upset me.”

“I didn’t want to take any chances.” She mumbled.

“Now you,” Hermione said. “need to get to bed. C’mon, I’ll help you.”

A/n Sisterly bonding! And in case you were wondering, Dumbledore will appear again. I love Dumbles.

Okay, so as for the "torture" stuff, I really don't know nor do I want to know about methods of torture, so I made up stuff. I have no idea how one would respond to it, and again, have no desire to find out.

Yeah, so, anyway, a lot of you have pointed out that the purebloods would be upset and this would cause an uproar of anti-Muggle...and you're getting ahead of me! I promise, the only aftermath will not be of the Weasleys. Wait until they go back to Hogwarts, which should be in a matter one-to-two chapters.

Signing off, and this is Truth.

A/n I so hate myself it's not even funny. I just finished writing my fic "Say Hello For Me." And I did horrible things. And this chapter isn't exactly sunshine and giggles either. I apologize for that and thank you for reading. Now I'm going to go bye-bye. Didn't sleep last night. Need to rest. Too energetic.

Bill stood up. Charlie rested his head on the table, his arms hanging limp and useless at his sides. Percy sat still, with his hands folded together, like usual, but the muscles in his jaw were tight and tense and his knuckles were white and his fingers bright red from squeezing his hands together so tightly. The twins were staring at each other and engaging in some silent communication. Ron stood, like his oldest brother, but walked over to the wall and sunk against it, resting in the corner behind next to the counter and in front of the wall. Harry had his glasses off, and was rubbing his head with so much force Sirius thought it might bruise. Remus was staring through the window at nothing in particular.

The next set of reactions kicked off by Bill backhanding the chair to the floor and cursing loudly. Charlie then started to bang his head against the table; Percy gripped the table as if to stabilize himself and stop from losing control; Fred swore just as loudly as Bill and stood, walking over to the counter and grabbing the handles of the cupboard above; George sat on the counter, his eyes vacant, and seemingly watched his twin; Ron curled into fetal position, his knees obstructing a view of his face. Harry was the worst though. He ran straight out of the house. It took a long time for anyone to realize he was gone, and even then it was Sirius.

He found his godson in the garden, lying prostrate and sobbing into the dirt. Sirius took the back of his shirt and lifted him up.

"Harry, are you okay?"

"THEY'RE WORSE THAN THE BLOODY DURSLEYS!" He wailed.  
"HERMIONE ALWAYS TOLD ME THEY WEREN'T NEARLY AS BAD! THEY'RE A THOUSAND TIMES WORSE, SIRIUS!"

Sirius took Harry in his arms, stroking his back and giving him words of reassurance and comfort as Harry cried. Tears rolled down Sirius's face as well, seeing his godson in such a state.

XoXoX

"She just—wasn't going to tell any of us this?!" Charlie roared.

"Can you blame her, Charlie?" Bill asked. "We're overprotective monsters, we would have been out to rip them apart and burn the pieces."

"Who's stopping us now?" Percy said through gritted teeth. So surprised were they about the person whose mouth that came out of, that they didn't even answer.

"She'll kill us if we change how we act toward her." Ron said.

"Won't let us sleep." Charlie added.

Arthur trudged into the kitchen, his dress robes changed out for pajamas. "Where's Harry?" He said, in a tone so obviously "I-need-to-talk-to-my-sons" that no one questioned how or why he left Molly.

At that moment, Harry and Sirius came back in the room. Remus looked at Sirius and nodded to the outside. They left, leaving the brothers alone with their father.

"Look, I know how you are all feeling right now. I've never had a stronger desire to kill anyone, but for the sake of the three most important girls in our lives, we need to cool it." He said intensely. They had never seen this side of their father. "I trust Sirius told you everything?"

"Yes." Bill said.

"And I trust you're all feeling very angry and violent?"

"And resisting the urge to punch through the windows." Ron mumbled. Arthur nodded.

“Remember what I said. We don’t want to upset your mother or your sisters.”

“I want them to die.” Fred said suddenly, biting off each word.

“I want them to pay.” George agreed through gritted teeth.

“They are horrible, heartless, cruel animals.”

“It’s a disgrace to call them the same species as us.”

“I hate them. I want them to suffer. I want them to die, and I want it to be painful.”

“More painful than the Dementor’s Kiss.” George kicked the wall.

They all stared at the twins, who had never gotten angry like this. They all expected them to be laughing about it, making jokes.

“Fred, George—” Arthur began.

“What’s going on?”

They all turned to see Hermione entering the room. “Ginny’s asleep. I wanted to talk to you about this.”

“She told you?” Ron said.

“Yes. Rather reluctantly, but she did nonetheless.” Hermione said, her voice rather distant. “Before any of you discuss tactics to kill those who gave me life and tried so hard to take it away, please find a way to fit me in however possible. My only objections would be any position where I wouldn’t be required to mortally wound them.”

“Wait a minute.” Arthur said. “No one is going to hurt anyone. Think of what Ginny would do if you went after the Grangers.”

“I don’t care!” Hermione interjected, talking at the speed of light and looking away from everyone but Harry and Ron. “These people have

hurt everyone in this family, whether physically or emotionally or mentally or all of the above! I won't let them get away without feeling all the pain they've brought this family! Not again, not after they've hurt my baby sister!"

She turned away and leaned her head against the wall as she cried. Harry placed a hand on her back. He was glad to see it was not as bad as he thought. She did not flinch. She was not scared, just angry.

"Hermione, you know Ginny would not want you to do this. And Molly. Come to that, no one in this room wants you to do anything to anyone. We want you to keep how you promised me from the start you would be: completely non-violent."

"It's because of them I made that promise." She reminded him, talking through gritted teeth.

"Exactly." Harry hummed. "Do you really want to fall to their level?"

Hermione just cried harder. She felt more hands on her, even recognized some of them. The twins, with their identical grip on her shoulder. Ron, with his uncomfortable, awkward hold on her hand. Percy, with his official, small gesture of a small pat on her other shoulder. Charlie, with his rough, calloused hands stroking her bicep. Bill, with his arm resting on her head, using it as an armrest. Arthur was a little more intimate, putting his arm around her neck, at the same time succeeding to pat the twins' hands, assuring them that it would get easier.

Harry, still with his hand in the middle of her back, spoke softly. "We love you Hermione. More than you know."

"More than I deserve." Hermione whispered.

He cocked his head to the side. "Do you really think that?"

XoXoX

He twisted a knife around in his fingers. It was almost as if he was taunting her, keeping something away from her that was rightfully

hers, when in fact it was quite the opposite. She tried to move out of the ropes that were binding her to the wall, but found she couldn't.

"It's futile, girl."

"Stop it," she mumbled.

"Sod off, bastard." The girl snapped.

"Those ropes will stay there, as will I, until I am done."

"No, don't hurt her."

The girl bared her teeth in a very doglike manner. He laughed hoarsely, twirling the knife again. Bringing it closer to the side of her head, he asked, "What are you going to do?"

She moved her head forward and knocked it against his wrist. He dropped the knife, and it went speeding across the room as he cursed. But then he smirked, seeing that she had not come out unscathed. She had a long slice down the side of her head. When she had collided with his wrist, she had also collided with the blade. Blood poured down the side of her head, coating her ear.

"No, stop bleeding."

"That's a nice wound you got there."

"Go screw yourself, Granger." The girl bit off.

"Stop!"

The man— Granger, he was called— slid over and got the knife. Taking the trip back in three long strides, he danced the tip on her forehead. She clenched her jaw as droplets of blood fell out of the wound. He smirked again.

The blade moved into an inch long diagonal line across her forehead. It cut deeply, and both girls knew it would scar.



“STOP!”

“You’ll never get to Hermione.” The girl promised. “I swear to God you never will.”

He sneered, digging the knife deeper as blood rained out of her forehead. “Richard Granger gets whatever he wants.”

“STOP, PLEASE!”

“Richard Granger is a Grade-A asshole. I doubt anyone would listen.”

He made another slash down her forehead, just as deep, right over the other one. It was the same size, the same angle, but for some reason it seemed even scarier as the blood from it combined with the other, sliding down the girl’s pale, freckled face.

“NO, PLEASE!”

“X marks the spot.” He said. “And I will get my daughter.”

“The only way you’ll get a daughter is if you reproduce, and I think I’ve made a point enough to stop that from happening again.” As the girl reminded him, he cringed, but brought the knife to the other hand and clenched his right fist.

“NO, PLEASE, DON’T, STOP IT! STOP IT!”

“YOU’LL NEVER GET HER!” The girl roared. “YOU’LL NEVER GET MY SISTER!”

He punched her forehead right where the ‘X’ was and walked out of the room.

Ginny shot up crying in her sister’s arms, still not thoroughly convinced Hermione was safe.

XoXoX

“Do you think she’s okay?” Charlie asked quietly. Hermione had left them to run upstairs. Ginny had been screaming at the top of her lungs, and they were all quite convinced it was their sister she wanted.

“I dunno,” Harry said. “The nightmares were the hardest part. You keep wanting to think that good things are a dream, that you’re really still in that horrible place and you’re going to wake up and be abused again.” He shook his head. “Well, you don’t want to, but it’s hard to get out of the habit.”

“When do you think they will stop?” Ron asked Harry.

Harry sighed, trying to stay kind for the sake of his family. What made him the expert on this stuff? Just because he lived so long in an abusive home...and Hermione broke down whenever someone tried to talk to her about it...oh. “I don’t know, honestly. Really they weren’t so bad for me, but that’s only because I was able to be sure I was in reality. The Dursleys went to prison and couldn’t hurt me anymore. But that’s hard to realize.”

Hermione came down, sighing. “Sorry. She fell back asleep. I bet she’ll wake up again though.”

Arthur turned suddenly to Hermione. “Did Ginny tell you on her own?”

“What?” Hermione said, taken aback by the sudden inquiry.

“Did Ginny tell you what happened to her on her own?”

Hermione looked at the floor, but shook her head. “No.”

“Why did you want to know? I mean, wouldn’t it have been the same thing?” Bill asked.

Her face tensed, she stood up straighter, and she clenched her fists. “No.” She stated firmly, harsher than they were used to from Hermione. “It was not the same thing. It was far, far worse. They gave me food most of the time, just not enough. They let me get my own water so I knew nothing was in it. And they never tortured me like that. When they locked me away, they never came back in, and I

welcomed it. Not once in the eight years I was with them did they torture and beat me and starve me and lock me away for two straight months, at least not all in the same time. In fact, they never did any of that at the same time for more than about twelve hours. And that I could barely stand. No, what they did to Ginny was far worse.”

“B-But...so what you told me was true?”

“What was that?”

“That the Dursleys were worse than the Grangers? At least the Grangers to you?”

Hermione nodded. “From what you’ve told me about the Dursleys? They were far worse to you than the Grangers were to me.” She told them, stressing the last word just enough to count.

“So...so none of the torture?”

She took a moment to answer, and the words came out slow and careful, as if to make sure they were the correct words. “None of the torture worse than what you had.”

They all nodded, seeming to understand. Their minds drifted after that, and eventually, one by one, silently, they disappeared, until only Harry was left in the kitchen, crying in the darkness and begging to wake up and have this all be a nightmare.

A/n Sorry this chapter was short and rather strange, but I wrote this whole thing in the last hour. I had not even had this planned, but then I realized I almost completely cut out the reactions of the brothers. But I didn’t want to add anything too big, because then I would have to rewrite the other chapters and I’m too lazy. So tell me if this chapter sucks or not. Part two will NOT be next chapter, but will be soon after next chapter.

Sixteen more days of school. Just a little over fifteen hours of Mr. Hall left. Do me a favor and keep reminding me it’s almost over.

Signing off, and this is Truth.

Disclaimer! I do not own anything, that's all J.K. Rowling's. To delete this message, press seven.

A/n I'm sorry I've been having longer waits for these chapters, but my attention span has taken a dramatic plunge the last three days. I wanted nothing more but to sit down and write, but I couldn't even focus on typing a disclaimer. When I read and when I write, the stories only seem to pass through, not really being absorbed. I have this feeling every year. I. Need. To. Get. Out. Of. School. Seriously. I'm dying. I really am. And I'm not even in high school yet. This is probably the worst year I've ever had.

"I'm here, I'm here. Calm down, it's going to be fine." Hermione told her, jumping onto her bed and holding her hand. "Ssh, calm down. Ginny, it's over. You're not in danger anymore."

But Ginny was still screaming, sweat covering her, tears running from her eyes.

"Calm down, Gin." She said quietly.

"No! No, you'll never get her!"

"Ginny, I'm right here." Hermione said, squeezing her hand to prove it. "I'm not going anywhere. I'm right here."

"STOP!"

She rocketed into a sitting position, suddenly wide awake. With one look at Hermione, fresh tears burst out of her eyes, and she fell into her sister's chest, melting into her tight embrace, sobbing over her nightmare. Hermione continued to remind her that she was there, and that she wasn't going anywhere, and she believed it helped Ginny to know that.

XoXoX

"You had another few nightmares, didn't you?" Harry asked her. Ginny shook her head.

“I’m fine.” She said. “I only wish Hermione would stop taking responsibility for it. She didn’t go to sleep last night, even after she gave me the Dreamless Sleeping Draught. She stayed up to make sure I didn’t have any more nightmares.”

“Under the influence of that potion?”

Ginny nodded. Harry rolled his eyes and walked away.

It was Christmas Eve. This could only mean celebration at the Burrow, and they had more to celebrate than any other family. Sirius was over, celebrating the anniversary of his release from Azkaban and getting somewhat drunk (on “happiness,” wink wink, nudge nudge) while helping to put up a billion decorations. As always, Fred and George led in the carols, and though most had advanced from the primitive “Christmas! Christmas!” no one could resist the classics.

But it didn’t start out as celebration. That morning, when Ginny came into the kitchen, her mother had her wand to the tip of the Daily Prophet and tears were rolling down her face.

“What’s going on?” She asked.

Molly had dropped both the paper and her wand. “N-Nothing.”

“Something is wrong.” Ginny said. “What is it?”

“There’s—it’s just an article about your trial, dear.”

“What?” She said, rolling forward to snatch the paper from the floor.

## MUGGLES TO GET KISSED

For the first time in over one hundred years, Muggles were sentenced to the Dementor’s Kiss yesterday afternoon.

Richard and Lauren Granger, respectively 34 and 36, were tried against the Wizengamot yesterday on charges of child abuse, kidnapping, torture, threats, and mistreatment and assaulting of a minor. Their captive, Ginny Weasley (10), was placed under

Legitimacy by Aurors. The memories of the Aurors during the period of invasion were provided to the Wizengamot. After almost no time for thought, an almost unanimous (Dolores Umbridge, former Senior Undersecretary to the Minister, wanted to hear the Grangers' testimony first, but was overruled and demoted) a vote sentenced the Grangers to a lifetime in prison and the Dementor's Kiss, the first time in one hundred and fifty-one years for a Muggle to get the latter sentence.

Upon being asked by Aurors why they kidnapped Miss Weasley, they answered that the Weasleys had "stolen" their daughter. It is true that the Weasleys won custody of the Grangers' daughter four years ago after the Grangers were accused of child abuse (they spent three years in jail for the offence), but they in no means kidnapped the girl, Hermione. Albus Dumbledore (Headmaster of Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry, Chief Warlock of the Wizengamot, Supreme Mugwump of the International Confederation of Wizards, Order of Merlin, First Class, and Grand Sorcerer) took her away from her abusive home and to the Weasleys.

Ginny Weasley was abducted with a ransom of Hermione. She protected her adoptive sister against the Grangers, resulting in not only severe medical problems, but what has been proved to be temporary paraplegia, confining her to a wheelchair even now, after her spinal cord was healed. For her courage, the Minister has awarded her an Order of Merlin, Third Class.

Ginny stopped reading right there, and an owl swooped through the window. The letter had a Ministry seal on it. She chucked away the paper and left the room as quickly as she could, taking cover in her bedroom.

Her mother had only bothered her three hours later with an offer to help with decorations. Ginny had jumped on the chance, and the subject of the trial, the Grangers, and the Order of Merlin were all dropped. In fact, Ginny wasn't even sure if anyone else knew about it.

Sirius raised his glass. "More mead!"

Remus picked up one of the three empty bottles on the table. "Just a chaser for the firewhisky, eh, Padfoot?"

"Woof!" Sirius let out his barking laugh, joining Fred and George in carols. They were all wearing Father Christmas hats, but it clashed horribly with the Weasley red hair. Sirius was even wearing a false beard and had charmed his hair white. Christmas was more so his favorite holiday than it ever had been.

"What does firewhisky taste like?" Ron asked Sirius.

"Bliss!" Sirius exclaimed, taking a shot of firewhisky and then a large gulp of mead.

"Don't get any more tattoos; you don't have room for Molly's initials." Harry said.

Sirius grinned in triumph as everyone laughed. "I think I can find somewhere."

Molly choked on her drink, causing another roar of laughter. Ginny smiled and looked at her family. They were all gathered around the tree, putting on garland and baubles on it. She the bauble in her hand. She took a breath and wheeled over to the tree. The rest of the family turned to her, drinks and decorations in hand, smiling and with their hats perched on their heads. Ginny couldn't fail to realize how happy they all looked. It almost made her guilty for slowing them down, being stuck in this chair and having swallowed their happiness for two full months. She took another deep breath and gripped the handles of her chair.

"What are you doing, Gin?" Charlie asked.

Ginny pushed herself up, one hand trying to keep balance on the handle, and stood in the chair. She reached forward and placed the bauble on the branch of the tree before falling back into the chair, gasping for breath and energy, but trying to hide it. It should not have taken her so much energy just to stand so briefly, but it did. Her family was staring at her with wide eyes and open mouths, and Sirius wasn't even drinking or saying or singing anything for the first time in

over two hours. Soon, Fred and George started clapping, just to be joined by the rest of her family.

“You didn’t even have any physical therapy, yet, Gin! You’re progressing already!” Percy said.

“We’re really proud of you Ginny.” Bill agreed.

For standing. That just didn’t seem right to Ginny. They were all standing. She had stood for three seconds and then her arm gave out. Her legs didn’t even have anything to do with it, except to be a pedestal. She refused to be happy about it.

But her family was so happy about it that they had a renewed joy as they continued to decorate. She looked up at where her bauble had been placed. Of course, she had the extra few inches of standing in the chair, but she had also been hunched over so her arm could hold her up. It had only made it about halfway up the tree, and only to the tip of the branch. She stretched her arm far up and pushed to the edge of the chair, managing to push the bauble farther down the branch.

Pathetic. She could reach it from the wheelchair.

And it wore her out so much. She closed her eyes and rested her head against the back of the seat. Her back, shoulders, and head all hurt. All her broken bones had been repaired, but that didn’t mean the bones were strong. She could almost feel the stress on her collar bone. But she didn’t want to take the painkiller potion. It just never felt right.

“Are you okay, Ginny?” a quiet voice asked. Ginny turned to see her mother standing next to her.

“Yeah, that...that just kind of brought back some pain.”

“Do you want your medicine?” Molly asked. Ginny shook her head.



"It doesn't take the pain away." She said quietly, looking forward at the tree. "It makes me feel numb, like the pain is still there, but it's hiding."

"Molly, where are you hiding the rest of the firewhisky?" Sirius slurred.

"Sirius, get a hold of yourself!" Molly chastised, pointing her wand at the almost-empty bottle and filling it up. Ginny took it as her chance to get away.

XoXoX

None of her siblings commented on it, but Ginny took her meal in her bedroom that night. She slept most of the evening and night, waking only for her dinner and to say goodnight to her family members. One thing she never failed to notice was how all her brothers now told her they loved her. It was strange to hear coming out of their mouths, because they rarely said those words to her, but she had grown used to hearing them, and now responded similarly.

After waking up from six nightmares in four hours, Ginny demanded a Dreamless Sleeping Draught. Hermione had not gone to sleep yet, but when she came into the bedroom and saw Ginny fast asleep, she too fell asleep, not awakened that night from Ginny's screaming.

When Ginny awoke the next morning, she was vaguely aware of the nightmares that had plagued her the evening before. The horrible, terrifying nightmares that they had found Hermione. That they killed her. Often, in these dreams, she died too, but she welcomed it. It meant the end of the dream.

"Are you okay, Ginny?"

She didn't even realize Hermione was in the room. Turning her head toward her sister, she nodded. "Yeah. What time is it?"

"Still early. You should go back to sleep. Enjoy your night of no dreams."

Ginny shook her head, desperately searching for a valid reason without having to explain why she really didn't want to. If she was awake, then it was because the potion wore off. So if she went back to sleep, she'd have bad dreams. And she didn't want to put Hermione through that.

Finally, she realized that there was a pile of presents at the foot of her bed. "It's Christmas morning, I don't want to go back to sleep."

Hermione grinned. Ginny raised an eyebrow, looking at the book in Hermione's hand and the pile of unopened presents at the foot of her bed.

"Why aren't any of your presents opened? When did you wake up?"

"Two hours ago." Hermione said. "And I didn't want to start until you were awake."

"Why not?"

Hermione shrugged. "You never open your presents without me."

XoXoX

Ron and Harry were ripping the paper off their gifts, showing them off to each other and beginning to eat some of the sweets they got.

"What's this?" Harry asked, finding a small package on the bottom of his pile. Ron raised an eyebrow while looking up from his box of Bertie Bott's Every Flavor Beans, wondering what it could be that caused Harry to have a present more than he did. Harry shrugged and ripped off the paper, a piece of paper fluttering down onto the bedspread and a heavy cloak in his hands. With a look at Ron, who shrugged, he read the note.

Your father left this in my possession before he died. Use it well.

"Use it well?" Harry repeated. "That's—ominous."

"Who's it from?"

"I dunno." He said, squinting at the letter. "I don't recognize the handwriting." Indeed, the handwriting was loopy and narrow. He looked at Ron again, confused. "Who would my father give his cloak to?"

"Let me see it." Ron said, walking over and picking up the cloak. His mouth dropped and he looked at Harry. "Blimey, mate, this is an Invisibility Cloak!"

Harry looked at it; it was. "Bloody hell!"

He snatched the cloak from Ron and put it around him, so he was a floating head. "Wicked!" Ron said.

"Who would have given this to me though? If you had this, wouldn't you want to keep it for yourself?"

Ron shrugged. "Maybe they don't want it."

"Or maybe..." He took off the cloak and stormed out of the room, Ron in tow. They went down to the kitchen, where Sirius and Remus were at the table.

"Hey, Prongsie, how are your gifts?" Sirius asked, smiling. Harry figured Molly had given him a strong hangover potion.

Both of the Marauders were smiling, but Harry wasn't playing. "Which one of you two left this for me?" He asked, holding up the cloak. They raised their eyebrows.

"Oh my God." Sirius gasped. "Is that—?"

"We didn't leave that for you, Harry." Remus said. "We haven't seen that cloak since James and Lily went into hiding."

Harry looked at them both, seeing they weren't lying. They had that look on their faces that they only wore when they were trapped in memories of James and Lily. "Well, if you didn't leave it, then someone had my father's Invisibility Cloak and thought that they

might make my Christmas, realizing that the late James Potter's son would probably enjoy having something of his father's."

He only used very long sentences like that when he was upset.

"Didn't you get anything else with it?"

Harry threw his arms up, the cloak still balled up in his right fist. "All I got with this thing was a note saying, 'Your father left this in my possession before he died. Use it well.'! I don't know who that would be, I don't exactly have photographic memory of my toddler years or else things would be a lot different!"

"Look, Harry, calm down." Remus said. "Sirius and I didn't even know your father didn't have the cloak with him when they went into hiding."

"That's strange." Harry said quietly, almost to himself. "Why would he give a cloak to someone and keep it secret? And why would that person not be one of the Marauders?"

XoXoX

"Oh, come on, that's just no fair." Ginny said. "To get this," She held up a Pumpkin Pasty, displaying it like a new product from a well-known company. "you must offer me something better than a handful of Every Flavor Beans."

"Fine." Hermione sighed, knowing how close she was to her favorite candy. She unwrapped a Chocolate Frog and looked at the card. "Then I suppose you wouldn't be interested in this Rowena Ravenclaw card?"

"You're joking!" Ginny gaped, looking at the card. "There's only a million of those!"

"Not as impressive as you think." Hermione laughed. "But...what would you be willing to trade for this card?"

Ginny smirked; she held up ten colorfully wrapped Pumpkin Pasties. It wasn't much of a sacrifice on Ginny's part. She didn't care much for Hermione's favorite anyway. "All of these, perhaps?"

"You're on!" Hermione said, chucking the card across the small space in between them. Ginny, in turn, threw all of her collection onto Hermione's bed, raining her lap with wrapped sweets. The two of them erupted into giggles. A knock on the door interrupted it.

"COME IN!" They screamed together. When the twins came in, the girls were laughing their heads off, their covered in wrappers, boxes, presents and sweets.

"Do you need any professional help?"

"No more than usual." Hermione shrugged, and Ginny laughed.

"C'mon, Hermione, don't be afraid to admit you're insane." Ginny said. "The rest of us already know."

"We were actually speaking more to you, kiddo."

"I resent that!" Ginny said. "I admitted to my insanity long ago!"

"Oh, we all remember, kiddo."

Sirius once decided to "hide" his firewhisky in a tea cup. Fred had fed Ginny a Dragon Drop, a sweet that burned your mouth. She had reached for the first drink she found—which happened to be Sirius's surprise. So after chugging down the whole cup, she had admitted to her insanity when someone pointed out her abnormal behavior. Upon finding out what happened, Molly poured every single bottle of firewhisky in the house down the drain and yelled at Sirius for hours.

"It doesn't count when you get a hangover the next day."

"I was nine!" Ginny defended herself. "And you fed me the Dragon Drop to begin with, I'm surprised Mum didn't yell at you."

"She was too busy being angry with Sirius."

"If I was to count every single time we were saved from Mum's wrath by Sirius—"

"—you would run out of numbers." George finished for his brother.

"You did have to hold my hair." Ginny reminded them.

"And did a great job of it, too." George said, thumping his chest proudly.

"Anyway, what did we come up to say?" Fred asked. "Oh yeah. Come down for dinner, you girls."

"We got Percy to wear his Weasley sweater." George winked.

"Be down in a minute." Ginny laughed. Hermione automatically walked over to help Ginny, but Ginny smiled and shook her head. "Go downstairs, I want to do something first."

"Okay." Hermione said, walking downstairs while tying her slightly large sweater in the back.

Ginny smiled and got into her wheelchair, turning quickly over to her bedside table. She opened the drawer and got out her photo album.

On the first page was baby pictures of all her brothers and herself, waving at the camera and giggling. And on the next page, the fake baby pictures of Hermione she had drawn when she figured out the Grangers had taken no pictures of their daughter. Harry had pictures in it they found in his family vault and from Sirius and Remus.

The next pages showed her family through the years. Birthday parties, Christmases, other holidays such as. There were pictures of them blowing out candles and jumping in triumph as they got all of them in one try. There were the pictures of the trick candles Fred and George put in the cakes. There were pictures of a lot of Fred and George's pranks, as well as Sirius helping them. There were pictures, just in general, of all the family, or certain siblings with other siblings, or Molly and/or Arthur with one or several of their children.

Pictures on broomsticks, for some, were the most abundant. It was hard to take Ron's picture unless he didn't know you were. So every once in a while one of them would sneak up to the Quidditch pitch with a camera and take a picture of Ron doing his daily laps. In all the other pictures, he looked rather irritated.

All the pictures of Percy were of him with a puffed out chest, trying to look important, some with various awards and such.

The pictures of Charlie showed him holding a broomstick, holding one of his siblings, or messing around with his siblings.

Bill was portrayed as "the successful big brother." He was shown with Percy and Charlie, all of them holding prefect badges out. He was shown with Ginny, Harry, Ron, and Hermione all hanging from him as he rode a broomstick, a feat that had yet to be topped. He was shown with the twins, his arms resting on their heads like they were armrests, the latter pair holding up Hogwarts acceptance letters.

Pictures of the twins showed them pulling pranks, running from Molly, or doing crazy tricks on broomsticks. A lot of them showed them with Sirius (in Molly's opinion, too many).

Harry was often shown with a small smile on his face, never really grinning as widely as his siblings. He would always look serious if a broom was in the shot. Sirius and Remus were shown a lot with him, and Sirius would be beaming, Remus would be smiling, and Harry would have that tiny little curve on his face. And when she got to the Sir and Ma'am Chronicles, where his arm was in that sling and his face looked much too sad, Ginny sighed.

Hermione was shown reading a lot, and it appeared in most she didn't even know the picture was taken. Usually, though, she was smiling very widely and shown with her siblings, especially Ginny.

Ginny herself was shown in her numerous phases. The Sir and Ma'am Chronicles, where she was beaming largely; the pigtail phase, where each and every picture showed her with matching ponytails; the watch-me-be-like-my-older-sister phase, where she read

constantly; and so on. Most of her pictures were with other family members, some which she couldn't name, because they were only there to celebrate the birthday of the first girl born into the Weasley family for generations and to treat her like royalty.

Merlin Ginny hated when they did that.

"C'mon, Ginny!" Someone yelled from downstairs.

"Coming!" She called back. Smiling to herself, she put the album back in the drawer and made her way downstairs.

When she got to the doorway of the kitchen, her family was all gathered around the table. They were smiling and laughing and wearing their Weasley sweaters. Sirius was asking for more mead and the twins were singing carols. Hermione and Percy were arguing about something academic, and the rest of them were arguing about something Quidditch as Molly laid food on the table. Remus was laughing and had his arm around Harry as they listened to the twins tell Ron of the chances the Chudley Canons had at winning the Cup as Ron's ears got redder and redder.

Ginny smiled. She formed her fingers into a long rectangle and put them up to her eyes. She moved her pointer finger up and down once like she was snapping a shot with a camera.

Moving her fingers down back to the arms of the chair, she said, "Picture perfect."

And so it was.

A/n Yayz! That article will become important, so keep it in your head, please! Would you believe I wrote most of this chapter just to fit in the photo album and the kitchen scenes? I got the idea for it and had to put it in.

So, so very close. I have never wanted school to end more than this year. Thank you for staying with me through all this. I love you all, and though I shouldn't have favorites, I love the reviews more. Sorry, but it really isn't much to ask.



Okay, now it's almost four in the morning and I think my parents told me not to stay up late. But how late is late?

Signing off, and this is Truth.

No, I will not!" Molly hissed.

"Molly, this affects her more than it affects us! She will have a say in what happens with this!"

"Arthur, I refuse!"

"What are you so afraid of? She'll find out eventually, Molly, and it's important she learn this from us!"

"What are you two talking about?" Ginny asked, coming into the kitchen.

"Nothing, dear." Molly said at once, but Arthur snatched the paper from the counter.

"This," Arthur said emphatically, and Ginny couldn't recall seeing him so angry in a long time. "is not nothing. There's a huge uproar in the magical community—especially among purebloods—of anti-Muggle slur because of your abduction. Malfoy is trying to get all these laws put into action that will basically allow a witch or wizard to kill a Muggle with no reason or proof besides feeling 'threatened.'"

"Not all Muggles are like the Grangers and the Dursleys. They deserve better than what we give them. How could anyone do this?"

"Ginny, dear, the laws haven't been passed yet."

"Good!" She said. "Because I want to have a say in this! I may be ten years old but I know enough about what's going on to say that these people who abducted me aren't like any other Muggles. They're—evil! And cruel, and they are barely human! So what if they happen to lack magic!"

Arthur looked hopeful. "A statement from Ginny might be able to save us."

"Us?" Ginny reiterated.

Arthur sighed. "There—these rules would really kind of make useless my department."

Ginny gritted her teeth. "I'm making a statement." She turned and wheeled off.

XoXoX

The meeting was that day. Ginny was given time to make her statement, though it was only because of Dumbledore that was true. Many people thought it was ridiculous they were letting a ten-year-old decide which laws should pass, no matter what she went through with Muggles. The meaningless crap she had to go through was only worth it as she told herself why she was doing it.

When the meeting finally did come, she was the last to speak, when everyone had already really made up their minds and she was just white noise. But she had something planned that would kill them all.

As much as she tried to not listen to the other speakers, she found it utterly impossible not to listen to Lucius Malfoy's words after a while.

"...and I do not think we should let these monsters destroy our world! We have kept them safe in their world, we have left them alone! And this is what we get for it? Three underage witches and wizards have been mistreated in just the last five years! Who's to say they will stop there?"

Ginny gripped the arms of her chair and screamed in her head to block out the ranting. Her face, however, remained calm. After a while, she managed to hear nothing of what he was saying. But when Malfoy turned to her after a minute, he distinctly mouthed the word 'paraplegia.' She started listening.

"The trauma must be unbearable. It is definitely one that will go to the head. But think of how worse it could be if this epidemic continues. Perhaps it could be permanent next time. Perhaps it could be much worse. Perhaps, next time," His mouth hung open silently for a moment as his eyes traveled up from Ginny's chair to her face. She

started at him intently, but composedly, her head tilted. He was setting her up to look crazy. "It could be death."

Ginny glowered at him. He turned back to the Wizengamot. "This is why I will work as hard as I can to make sure there is no 'next time.'"

He sat down, and after some clapping and cheering from the witches and wizards sitting in, Dumbledore looked down at his notes.

"Miss Weasley, you may speak now."

She rolled to the front of the hall and looked up at the Wizengamot. They were looking at her amusedly, as if she was being comical. Of course she knew why. No one was going to take serious a ten-year-old. Especially not after someone had just told them she could very well have had post-traumatic stress disorder. She sighed and stared at them, her head tilted again.

"I know you all think I'm not to be taken seriously, that I'm just a ten-year-old. But you have no idea how maturing eight weeks of starvation and torture is. I know for a fact that just because there are a few evil people in a bunch doesn't mean we should dismiss the whole group as being insane, sadistic fiends that want to kill us. Most of them don't even know we exist. How can they want to kill something that doesn't exist? And they don't know we're protecting them, if we even are. They think it's just happening. They can't very well repay us if they don't know it's going on."

"There's still no reason to trust them! They have been violent and cruel to three innocent young people, magic or not, and we cannot assume they will change their ways!" Malfoy erupted.

"Four cruel, evil people cannot and do not define over a billion." Dumbledore interrupted him. "Miss Weasley is right. If the Muggles were to find out about us, about Voldemort—" He paid no heed to the winces and gasps. "—and his followers, and decided to commit genocide on the Wizarding world, we would not stand up to it, would we?"

There was a murmur of agreement in the hall; Lucius Malfoy stood, livid, seething, irate, beside himself with rage. "These people who crippled this poor girl could have others, there could be more out there!"

"Of course there are more out there, but that doesn't mean we have to go killing every single one to get to them!" Ginny roared. "The Dursleys and the Grangers are in prison, they can't hurt anyone!"

"They are scum!"

"We can't own the world, Malfoy!"

He knocked over a chair in his ire. "I won't argue about this with a ten-year-old!" He boomed before storming out of the hall. Silence struck the hall, and the Wizengamot looked purely dumbstruck. Ginny took a deep breath and tried very hard to calm down. She just made Lucius Malfoy storm out of an important Ministry meeting about his own proposal. But this was serious. This was not just about killing a few wrongdoing Muggles. This was genocide, and they needed to know.

"I hope you know what you're doing by passing this law." Ginny said quietly, but still loud enough to carry. "This could be the death of thousands, millions of Muggles, and it would all be your fault." She, with her father in tow, left the room.

XoXoX

Molly pulled Fred and George into the house by their collars; they were covered in snow and blood, but had giant smiles on their faces. To test each other at their dodging skills should they ever duel, they threw snowballs at each other. Well, that got boring, so they got the idea that they should put rocks in the snowballs. What they didn't expect was for that to make the snowballs fly differently and be more unpredictable. At first it seemed good, but then they started getting hit with the rocks. They thought it was fun until their mother saw what they were doing.

“You two could have been seriously hurt! What were you thinking? Rocks, honestly! After all that has happened with your sister, you’re willing to put yourself in any danger at all? How could you be so stupid? How could you be so reckless as to put rocks in snowballs?!” Molly roared. The twins, who had been looking down, looked at each other and grinned. “Wipe those smiles of your faces, you’re going to be severely punished!” She shouted. The twins lost the pink in their cheeks they had from being in the freezing weather. “What would you have done if one of you was seriously hurt? You obviously care about each other, you’re always being stupid together! It would have been the other’s fault!”

Hermione walked downstairs. Molly stopped yelling as she did. Hermione looked around and raised an eyebrow. “Why is there a trail of blood and water through the kitchen and on the table?”

“Because your brothers are gits.” Molly mumbled, vanishing all the blood and water with a wave of his wand. Just as she did, Ginny and Arthur entered the kitchen.

XoXoX

“Miss Weasley.”

Ginny looked up at the carrier of the cold, cruel voice. His face looked like it was stone; and not in the good way. It looked incapable of anything but a frown, smirk, and sneer.

“I hope you weren’t getting the wrong message in there. I am very concerned about you and the rest of the Wizarding world. Muggles could be a danger. It’s something you can’t understand yet. But I do hope you will...someday.” He said, a smirk paving its way onto his face.

“Sod off, Malfoy. You have no right to be in this.”

“I am trying to defend thousands of lives, Miss Weasley, yours included,” Lucius said, his jaw clenching.

“Well, as you can see from my memories, Mr. Malfoy,” She spat the name like it was a swear word. “I don’t need to be defended.”

“This is a serious matter, Miss Weasley. I was very sad to hear what happened to you and wanted to prevent it from happening again.”

“You don’t give a damn about me!” Ginny shouted. “You’re using what happened to me as a ploy to get your ridiculous laws passed! I know exactly what’s going on! You’re just afraid of Muggles so you want them destroyed! This was what you were waiting for, wasn’t it? Someone to get hurt? You figured that if enough people were afraid of what would happen to them if they let the ‘Muggle monsters’ run free, that they wouldn’t any more. What’s it next? Muggle-borns?” She shook her head. “That ‘next time’ you were talking about? I hope it’s you.”

Arthur pulled her away before Malfoy had a chance to respond. He was scolding Ginny that she shouldn’t talk that way to people, no matter how much they deserve it and how true it probably was, but she wasn’t really listening. Her father didn’t scold well. She always knew he was proud for what they did and was really congratulating them, but didn’t want Molly to find out, so he chided them lightly. So Ginny didn’t pay attention. Though she didn’t investigate, it sounded like he was even smiling.

By the time they showed back up the Burrow, there were a few heavy coating of snow on the ground and another falling from the sky. Arthur carried Ginny to the porch before placing her in her chair, even though she reminded him it was magically improved and there was no need for him to carry her. She remembered the conversation they had earlier in the process.

“I could probably bend a rule or two and get you a magic carpet, just for a few months.”

“No!” Ginny said. “You don’t have to.”

“I’ll bet I can get an exception.”

“No, Dad, no exceptions. No special treatment. I don't want this to be a big deal.”

That had been rather useless, hadn't it? Of course it would be a big deal. She was surprised it had stayed silent so long.

Ginny noticed a spot of red on the snow as they passed. It was being covered with freshly fallen snow, so she had no idea how large it was, but her heart skipped a few beats. She thought of the blood that had poured from her head. The blood that she had vomited up. The blood that slipped down her arm, leaving tracks of flaking red paint.

But she forced herself to ignore it. She pushed open the door and rolled into the kitchen just to find that she couldn't ignore it.

Her brothers were covered in blood.

Her heart started beating much too quickly. She began to hyperventilate. Her head spun. Her vision went weird. She knew she shouldn't be looking at it. But she couldn't tear her eyes away. Her brain couldn't process any other picture but the blood and where it was coming from. She couldn't close her eyes. She couldn't blink. The only thing that existed was the horrifying scene in front of her and the memory of the puddle of blood outside in the snow.

“Ginny? Are you okay? What's wrong?”

It was all down the sides of their faces, coming from their temples and their noses and their lips and their foreheads. Like their heads had been beaten against a wall...No. That wouldn't happen to them. It wouldn't. Could it?

“It's the blood. Fred, George, get outside. Go out the front door, don't pass her. If she's really good she'll be able to smell it.” Hermione's voice said. Ginny was vaguely aware of Fred and George getting up and hurrying out of the room. She felt a petite hand on her shoulder, squeezing reassuringly. “It's okay, Ginny. They were being gits. Throwing snowball concealed rocks at each other. Just being Fred and George, nothing new, okay? There's nothing to worry about, they



weren't hurt badly. It was just fresh, that's why it was such a potent smell."

"The—it was everywhere." She mumbled, her voice cracking even in the low tone. "Outside in the snow...a little...it was frozen..."

Hermione looked up to her mother. "Molly?"

Ginny felt someone slip by her and heard the door close. "Really, Ginny, nothing is wrong. They were just playing around. Nothing a little healing charm won't fix."

"I-I-I c-c-can't b-bre-breathe." Ginny gasped. She realized only then how violently she was shaking as she tried to raise her voice even the slightest in panic, and her teeth were chattering. Hermione's finger brushed over the side of her neck, her fingertips pausing briefly at her pulse point.

"Your heart is pounding, Ginny." Hermione chuckled. "Don't worry, this goes away. In any matter of time you'll have a thousand good memories for every bad memory you have. Then the fears will be repressed. And the smell will mean nothing."

"It smells like iron." She whispered.

Hermione nodded. "I know. Not exactly the best smell ever."

XoXoX

"Why do you think I get the overwhelming feeling that half of what is going on in my youngest sister's life as of late I don't know anything about?" Harry asked in what could only be called the brotherly bonding session later that day. Fred and George had just told the story of what happened when Ginny saw blood on them.

"Uh...probably because we don't?" Charlie volunteered. "How can anyone catch up? She's terrifyingly complex these days."

"And that comes from the bloke who's been watching her since she came back," George said.

"They messed with her there," Fred said. "And I'm not sure it'll go away easily."

All the brothers sat in silence for a while. They used to have meetings like this once a week, but since they had come back for Christmas, it had been nearly every day. They were always rather impromptu, and no one was really sure why, but whenever any of the brothers felt like they wanted one to start, they all appeared in the same spot at the same time and began to talk. Hermione and Ginny never really seemed to know, and if they did, they didn't interrupt. Arthur sometimes joined, but only on occasion, and these were one of the only times Molly did not bother them. They were completely alone as brothers.

"If you got through to me in two weeks, it won't take Ginny more than a month." Harry said. "When'd she come home, the twentieth? By the end of January all that's going to be left is some physical therapy."

"Harry," Bill said. "In all fairness, look at her. She panics at the smallest sign of blood, she can't get within ten feet of a knife without hyperventilating; it took her three weeks to get over her fear of fire for Merlin's sake! If you surprise her she'll get ready to fight back, if you ask her how she's doing she'll stare at you warily before realizing who you are, and if you try to take her away from Hermione she throws a fit and acts like she's four! Not even to mention the nightmares she's been having or when she will randomly get these headaches and go to lie down when she's really in her room crying. She's not well, and it's going to take more than just a month to get rid of all this."

They all fell silent.

"What do you think happened in the trial?" Percy asked.

"Dad said Lucius Malfoy kept making it look like Ginny had post-traumatic stress disorder and was a loon. He kept citing the fact that she was a 'little girl.' But what really upset Ginny was when he was talking about just caring about her and her generation or something," Charlie said. "She screamed at him that he didn't care about her or any children and he was just using her to get his extremist laws

passed. Then she basically told him to get tortured and die before Dad pushed her away.”

“That’s our baby sister.” George smiled.

Fred nodded, agreeing. “You have to be proud.”

XoXoX

“G’night, Gin. Love you,” Ron said, patting her arm awkwardly. Harry offered her a small hug, telling her the same.

“Nighty-night, Imp!” The twins said together, mockingly giving her big, wet kisses on the cheek. Ginny smiled at this. “Love you!” They said before exiting the room.

“Night, kiddo.” Bill smiled, having come in right after the twins. “Have a good sleep. Love you.”

Charlie and Percy wished her good dreams and informed her of their love before walking out. Molly walked in and sat on the bed.

“Are you going to take the potion?” She asked. Ginny nodded. “Okay. Have a good sleep, dear. It’s been a very long day. I’ll see you in the morning.” She kissed the side of her forehead, where there was not a bandage. “Love you.”

“I have to go to work, so before I’m late,” Arthur said, slipping into the room and kissing her cheek. “Love you, have a great sleep, see you in the morning.” And then he dashed out of the room. Ginny laughed.

“Good night, dear.” Molly said, standing and walking out of the room. A few moments later, Hermione walked in.

“Are you doing okay, Ginny?” She asked. Ginny nodded. “You should get some sleep. Can’t imagine how this day must have been.”

“Don’t want to sleep.”

Hermione stopped in the middle of taking her socks off. “Why not?”

"The dreams will come back." Ginny said in a whisper, sitting up in bed.

"Take the potion and you won't have any dreams." Hermione said, starting to get a little angry.

Ginny shook her head. "I don't want to take the potion. I want the dreams to go away. I want the nightmares to go away. But every time I close my eyes I see his face. I see her face. I see him stabbing me. I see her burning me. I can't do it, Hermione. I can't let myself fall asleep."

Hermione walked over to her sister's bed and put an arm around her as the younger girl started to cry. "It's okay, Ginny. But it's over now. You're going to start physical therapy in January. Soon the only thing that will last of them is the memories, and then the nightmares won't mean anything."

Ginny shook her head. "There was one scar that they couldn't heal. They don't know why, but it won't go away."

"What are you talking about, Ginny?"

She sighed and reached up to her forehead. On the right side of her forehead, just above her eyebrow, was a square of white gauze taped to her skin. She peeled it off, and Hermione gasped when she saw the 'X' on her sister's forehead.

"Now Harry isn't the only one in this family with a scar on their forehead that reminds them of a horrible time," she said, tears leaking out of her eyes. She fell onto the bed, lying on her side. Hermione took her into her arms and they cried together, eventually falling asleep next to each other.

XoXoX

"If we don't put the laws into motion, Lucius Malfoy might stop donating to the Ministry." One official said.

“Yes, but if we do, then every Muggle on this planet could very well die.” Amelia Bones said. “This is more serious than money. We are talking about innocent human lives that could be lost because—what? We’re concerned about money? This is ridiculous. These laws cannot be passed.”

“Madam Bones is right.” Fudge said. “There are other ways to obtain money besides Lucius Malfoy. But think of what would happen if we passed this law. Innocent people could die, and then the Ministry would get horrible press, and less people would finance and we would be in a horrible position. What it comes down to is that we’re in a worse way passing these laws than we are not passing them.”

“So, what does that mean?”

“It means that you should call the Prophet. No laws have been changed.”

A/n Wee! Okay. So, a few comments. One, the snowballs with rocks hidden in them was something kids used to do in my old neighborhood in Chicago, until parents found out and went insane. I used to always go crazy because I have a weird type of hemophobia where I am fine if the blood is on me, but if anyone else is bleeding, I panic. The description of Ginny’s reaction to the blood? Yeah...that didn’t take much imagination on my part.

Two, the scar on her forehead will become important. Especially (duh) how it connects her to Harry. There was foreshadowing in this chapter about that, and a few other things. One won’t happen until she gets to Hogwarts. Cool, huh?

Three, don’t you just have to love that the Ministry only declined the laws because of money and publicity?

Speaking of love, I am overwhelmed with it! So many reviews! So many alerts! Thank you, thank you, thank you, for putting up with me and reading my story and (maybe) leaving reviews! THANK YOU!

Jesus H. Christ this was a long A/n.

Signing off, and this is Truth.

A/n Sing it with me: Summer, summer, summer, summer...it has no other lyrics, but damn it has a good ring to it!

Ginny burst into hysterical tears, wailing and holding onto Hermione with her dear life. Hermione shushed her and rubbed her back gently, hugging her tightly. The others thought of ways to get Hermione away from her sister, who had been holding onto her and crying for nearly ten minutes.

"It's okay, Ginny. It's only a few months."

"They're going to kill you," Ginny mumbled.

"They can't, Ginny, they've been Obliviated, they don't know they ever had a daughter, they don't know you were ever born, they don't know there's a family called the Weasleys on this planet. And they've been Kissed, so they don't necessarily have any emotions like hate or the thirst for revenge, and they are in a very secure prison cell. I am completely safe, you are completely safe, this whole family is completely safe. You have nothing to worry about besides your physical therapy and healing these injuries, all right?"

"No, they could still hurt you."

"Nothing is going to hurt me, Ginny," Hermione said. "I am as safe as I'll ever be inside the walls of Hogwarts. Never fear for me when I'm in Hogwarts. Okay?"

"Okay."

"Now be good. Listen to Molly and Arthur, listen especially to the Healers, stay on your diet, in bed by ten, nothing dangerous or you'll never see the light of day again, and if I hear about you being alone anywhere after dark I'm going to kick your bony little arse."

"Hermione Jean Weasley!"

"Sorry," Hermione said, turning quickly from Ginny to Molly and back. "That is, I'm going to kick your bony little arse if Molly doesn't do a good enough job."

Molly smiled. Ginny, however, wiped a tear away and found more falling. Hermione smiled at her.

“Really, Ginny,” she said. “Don’t worry about me.”

She ran her thumb over the ‘X’ shaped scar on Ginny’s forehead. Harry subconsciously did the same to his lightning bolt scar.

“Write me every day,” Ginny made her swear. “I want to know about every minute of every day. Take detailed notes if you have to.”

“Worry about yourself, Gin,” Hermione smiled. “Not me.”

“Only if you do the same.”

And so, they both promised, both feeling very bad about it, because they both knew that they would be breaking their promise to their sister within the first two minutes of them being apart.

XoXoX

“She’s gonna be fine, Hermione,” Harry assured her. “You’re the reason she went through all this, she just can’t get it out of her head that you’ll be hurt. If she knows you’re fine, she’ll be fine.”

Hermione sighed. “I know.”

They were sitting in McGonagall’s office, waiting for Fred and George to come through the fireplace. Once they did, they all took deep breaths and walked outside to and to the Gryffindor common room. Even as they headed that way, they could sense people staring at them, hear them whispering. While they were somewhat used to it—what with Harry being who he was, Hermione having been the only person with the last name of Weasley without red hair, Percy being so annoying, Fred and George so popular, and Ron being around them so much (A/n Sorry Ron)—it wasn’t anything new, but for some reason, this time it felt all the different. They felt every single pair of eyes, they heard every single little voice into another’s ear, they noticed every single double take, every single stop.



The walk to Gryffindor Tower seemed seven times longer. When they finally did reach, they were just ambushed by a thousand and one questions.

“Why didn’t you tell us?”

“Is your sister okay?”

“Is Hermione crazy too?”

They didn’t answer any of them. All they did was sit in their favorite chairs near the fire. After they did that, everyone kind of ignored them. Most went off to lunch, but the Weasleys stayed in the common room. When most of the Gryffindors were gone, Fred spoke.

“Why didn’t she show us that scar before?”

“A scar of an abnormal shape was placed on her head by an evil man and cannot be taken away, leaving it as a forever reminder of a horrible yet significant event in not only her life but the Wizarding world,” Hermione said. “Ring a bell?”

They all turned to Harry.

“Harry gets enough publicity for his scar,” Hermione said. “I don’t think she wants the same. She covered it with a bandage all the times she’s been outside so far. I wouldn’t be surprised if she hid it for a long, long time.”

XoXoX

“Ginny, what are you doing out of bed? You have your first day of physical therapy tomorrow, you really should rest up,” Molly said. Ginny was in her chair, rolling backward away from and then forward towards the window, all the time keeping her eyes on the sky.

“If I get tired in physical therapy tomorrow because I was sitting in a wheelchair for a few extra hours then my condition is more pathetic

than I ever would have imagined,” Ginny said. “I would really rather prefer to pretend I don’t have to and not make a big deal out of this.”

“Whatever you want, dear,” Molly shrugged. Ginny turned toward her mother, her eyes dull and unreadable.

“Mum, if I weren’t in this chair, would you ever say that to me?” She asked. “Would you ever let me off the hook for not resting when you told me to, or letting me skip taking my medicine? Would you ever sit back while I tried to force Hermione to stay from her education, or not tell me off for throwing a fit? Why do you—why do all of you—walk around here like you’re going to turn the corner and find me dead?”

Her eyes were completely readable now. Miles, acres of disappointment, melancholy, and pain, all masked with a fresh layer of glistening tears. Molly knew that Ginny hated it. She hated it more than being stuck in the wheelchair, more than the fact that she couldn’t see blood or get near a knife, more than the nightmares, more than the fear that it will happen again, whether to her or her family.

She hated the fact that those monsters had such an impression on her life and her family’s. She hated that after all that time—that suffering, that pain, that constant fear—it still had so much of an impact. She hated that after they were Obliviated, after they were imprisoned, after they were subject to the bloody Dementor’s Kiss, after she lived through two months of endless abuse, torture, starvation and dehydration, after death had shook hands with her and welcomed her to his humble abode and she had turned around to go home, she still was not done with those goddamn, motherfucking Grangers.

And if any little bit of anyone condemned, criticized, or thought badly of her daughter because of that, Molly was ready to hex them without a second’s thought.

“Ginny, it’s late,” Molly said quietly, gesturing to the clock, which read eleven. “You really should get to sleep, you promised Hermione.”

"If I sleep, the nightmares will come back," Ginny whispered, closing her eyes. "Why won't they go away, Mum? He—he won't stop stabbing people. You, Dad, Hermione, Harry, Ron, Fred, George, Bill, Charlie, Percy—why won't he stop hurting them, Mum? Why won't he stop hurting you?"

Molly sighed. "Ginny, I know you didn't want to do this at first—"

"I'm not going to the shrink, Mum," Ginny said. "That's the last thing I need right now. They're just going to make me think about it more, and see more blood, and see knives, and I can't do that, Mum, at least not yet."

As more tears popped out of her eyes and fell down her cheeks, Molly walked over and hugged her. She lifted her and placed her in the bed.

"Do you remember when I first explained to you what blood was?"

"You told me it was my arm crying," Ginny said. "You said that how people cried when I got hurt, so does your skin. It cries, but it cries red. And they aren't called tears, they're called blood. That's all I remember."

"Do you remember what your main argument was?"

Ginny sniffed. "I said that tears moved faster. I said I didn't like blood because it moved too slowly," she sniffed again, shifting in bed as best she could. "And I still don't like blood."

Molly laughed. "No, not the least bit."

"I love you, Mummy," Ginny told her, her lips forming a pout. Molly laughed.

"Love you too, dear," She said, moving Ginny's hair out of her face to reveal the sickening scar. Ginny had been wearing her hair to swoop over her forehead to hide it, and yet it still bothered Molly more than ever.

"I'm going to go to sleep," Ginny said. She was shaking at the thought, her knuckles white grasping the blankets.

Molly pulled up a chair from the desk. "I'm not going to leave your side. It's going to be harder without Hermione."

Ginny burst into tears.

XoXoX

"Hermione, we're trying to sleep," Lavender barked.

"Well I'm trying to telepathically communicate with my paraplegic, malnourished, traumatized, nightmare-struck sister to tell her everything is and is going continue to be all right. I think you can last a few more hours without sleep if she managed nearly two months!"

"You've gone mad, Weasley," Parvati mumbled. Hermione continued to pace the floor of her dormitory. Parvati sat up in bed. "For Merlin's sake, you've already written her two letters! Do I have to go send your brothers on a rant directed at you or will you calm down yourself?"

Hermione didn't answer. She sat down in the middle of the bed and covered her face with her hands, her shoulders shaking with silent sobs. Lavender and Parvati sat straight up in bed, walking over to their classmate. The former put her arm around Hermione's shoulders, while the latter sat in front of her on the bed.

"Sorry, Hermione," Parvati said. "We don't know what it's like to have your sister in such danger, or anyone you love. I can't imagine this for you."

"What if I told you your owl was coming back? Would that help you?" Lavender asked. Hermione popped up from the bed and ran over to the window.

XoXoX

“Hey, Molly, read this,” Arthur chuckled, walking into his daughters’ room. Molly took the letter from him and read.

Dear Molly and Arthur,

We got to Hogwarts safely and with no reported incidents. People are staring at us because of the trials and everything, but Harry told us you get used to it.

What I wanted to ask you was to read a letter to Ginny if she wakes up with a nightmare. I attached it, it’s in the envelope. It’ll let her know I’m safe, and I think that will really help her. Thank you very much for this. I’m driving everyone mad.

Love, Hermione

P.S. The boys say to tell Ginny they love her...and you two as well.

Molly sighed. “That letter may come in handy. She hasn’t woken up yet, but she’s been moaning and letting out little screams all night.”

“Do you want me to stay up with her a while?” Arthur asked. Molly looked to Ginny, whose knuckles were white gripping the sheets below her, and back to Arthur. She shook her head.

“I want to be with her tonight.”

XoXoX

“So how late did you stay up worrying about Ginny and pissing off your roommates?”

“A letter came from home at about midnight. They wrote a letter to me immediately telling me to go to sleep,” Hermione answered Fred. George smacked the back of her head.

“Seriously, Hermione, do you think that Ginny would want you to do this?” He asked.

“You don’t even know if she’s having nightmares!” Fred added.

"I know she wouldn't tell me if she was!"

"Maybe that's for your own good!" George said.

"You were probably just end up Flooing to the Burrow and staying by her side all night!"

"At this rate you'll have less sleep than Ginny!"

Hermione looked between them. "I cannot believe you two, the kings of trouble, jokes, and pranks, are telling me off."

"First of all," George said holding up a finger. "We are not kings."

"We are supreme rulers of all that is trouble, jokes, and pranks. Get it straight."

"Second of all," He held up another finger. "We sleep. We don't do—"

"Or not do, for that matter."

"Anything that could be hazardous to our lives."

"You seem to have trouble with that," Fred analyzed.

Hermione had her arms crossed over her chest and her eyebrows raised. She was always made fun of by the brothers because she could not raise only one of her eyebrows. They always teased and taunted her about it. None of them really knew the importance of it other than to convey skepticism, but it seemed to be important among the Weasley children. "You know that if you told me my name was Hermione Jean Weasley I still wouldn't take you seriously, right?"

"Unfortunately this is true," George said.

"But that doesn't mean we're going to stop talking."

XoXoX

Ginny was sitting up in bed, her arms wrapped around her chest, hugging herself. She was shaking, her eyes were wide, and she was covered in sweat. At random intervals, she would let out a tiny whimper and flinch for seemingly no reason.

She had Hermione's letter in her left hand, but for some reason it seemed everything but true. Every ounce of her had some doubt that the letter really came from her sister. Every ounce of her was convinced Hermione was dead, or maimed, or locked up by some vengeful Muggles that wanted to kill one of the Weasleys.

The nightmare was no help. It had been excruciatingly long, and most of it she didn't even remember ever having gone through. But nonetheless, she saw it. She heard it. She felt it. Blades piercing into her tissue, flames licking and burning her skin, air failing her lungs, repressed screams burning her parched throat, blood covering her everything, bile coming up her mouth from her quashed stomach, pain stabbing her whole being.

Worse than anything, it wasn't just her. She wouldn't have been half as bad if it was just her. It was never just her. This dream had everyone. Her brothers, her sister, her parents; even Remus and Sirius were in nightmares now. They were being tortured in every way she was.

She was trembling with fear, the parchment in her hand crumbling and rattling along with her shivers. Molly came in with a glass of water and sat on the bed next to her. Ginny gulped down the whole glass with one swallow, not even a second passing. Her mother pointed to the goblet with her wand, said a simple charm, and it refilled. Ginny drank again. This process repeated about ten times, before Ginny finally placed her head in Molly's chest and cried.

Molly did not ask any questions, because she did not want to remind her daughter of the horror and severity of the nightmare she had. It had taken her just about twenty minutes to get her to stop screaming. Almost an hour after that to get her to stop sobbing. Luckily Arthur was at work. She could not begin to imagine her husband's face upon seeing his "baby girl" in such agony, and frankly she did not want to.

As she held Ginny in her arms, stroking her hair and trying her best to calm her, she realized how much she loved being a mother. It was a strange thought at the moment, but she had felt so useless the last weeks when Ginny would barely go a half a meter unless Hermione was right there next to her. Now, she was the one trying to keep Ginny calm. She was not Hermione, she had nothing to do with the abduction and was in no danger of getting hurt by anyone, but Ginny needed her. Not because she was worried for her mother, not because she needed reassurance that her mother was okay, but simply because she was her mother. Nothing more, nothing less.

Molly saw that Ginny still had the letter in her hand. The former had read the letter to the latter, but it had no impact. All sources said that Ginny needed more evidence than a letter. Molly had always liked that her daughter needed more evidence than a letter or a piece of paper, rather she needed to see someone or see something happen for herself. Now, she found it rather inconvenient.

She looked out the window to the rising sun. "Do you want me to cancel your physical therapy appointment today?"

Ginny shot up, shaking her head. "No!"

"You think you're up for that?"

"I need to do this, Mum. I need to walk again, and I can't let my nightmares get to me. This is something I need to do."

Molly looked into those confident, stubborn eyes that all the Weasleys loved and hated. They loved them when Ginny, for example, couldn't do a particular trick on a broom but practiced until she couldn't see through the night to get it perfect. They loved them when she still wanted to play a game even though she had hurt herself.

They loved them when she, for example, was courageously determined to walk again, no matter how many bad memories it brought up.

But they hated them. They hated them when she, for example, couldn't do a particularly dangerous trick on a broom but practiced



until she couldn't see through the night and had multiple injuries to get it perfect. They hated them when she wanted to chase the gnomes around the garden even though she broke her arm doing it once.

They hated them when she, for example, was senselessly determined to not allow horrible, evil nightmares that caused her to scream and sob for hours "get to her."

Right now, Molly despised those assertive, headstrong eyes.

XoXoX

"Those are them," a boy said to his friend.

"The ones whose sister almost got killed?"

"Yeah."

"See those kids?" another girl said.

"What about them?"

"They're sister tore Lucius Malfoy a new one. She almost died, too."

"Malfoy tried to kill her?"

"No, stupid! Before Malfoy, she almost died. Don't you read the bloody Prophet?"

Harry, Ron, Hermione, Fred, George, and Percy all pretended to be perfectly oblivious as they walked the halls and heard people discussing Ginny like a heroine. They assembled at dinner and shared stories and laughter. Even Hermione.

But after a sound night of sleep for all of them, they walked down to breakfast and sat at the table.

"Did you sleep last night, Hermione?"

“Yeah, the exhaustion wore up on me,” She admitted.

That’s when the owls came in. That’s when the letter came in.

That’s when Hermione knew something needed to be done.

XoXoX

“Ginny? Hi, I’m Linda Capio. But I very much hate the name Linda, so please just call me Capio.”

Ginny smiled at her physical therapist. She couldn’t have been a day over twenty-five, with long, dark brown hair to her waist and bright blue eyes. “Okay. Capio.”

“I would like to ask for you to leave, Mrs. Weasley. It’s better if it’s just me and Ginny. That is, if she’s okay with it,” Capio and Molly both turned to Ginny, who sat petrified.

“Y-Yeah, s-sure,” she stammered.

“Only if you’re sure, Ginny,” Capio said. Ginny nodded.

“What—whatever’s best.”

Molly kissed her forehead, steering clear of seeing the scar. “I’ll be right in the next room. If you need me, just call. Promise me?”

“I promise,” Ginny said. Molly stood and walked out of the room. Capio smiled.

“You’re a lucky girl, Ginny.”

“I know,” Ginny said. “So, er, should we get started?”

“Yeah, right away,” Capio walked toward her. “I just want to see the extent of your injuries. The whole room has a cushion charm on it, you can’t possibly hurt yourself in here. If you fall, I will do my best to catch you. You just have to trust me. Do you trust me?”

Trust her! A voice in the back of her head ordered her. She's not a Granger!

Ginny gulped and nodded hesitantly.

"Good. Now give me your hands."

Ginny complied. Capio frowned. "What's wrong?"

"You're much too light. You need to gain weight, kiddo," she said, pulling Ginny to her feet. Ginny fell backward immediately, out of breath. "Are you okay?"

She nodded. Capio sighed and let go of her hands.

"Your injuries are serious. You have no control over your legs. It's as good as if you didn't have them at all. So every time you try to support yourself, your body seems to think there's nothing to hold you up and you fall back."

"Really?"

"I don't know, but that sounds logical, doesn't it?"

They both laughed. Capio stepped back. "We're going to try this one step at a time. One baby step at a time. Before you can run, you have to walk. Before you can walk, you have to crawl."

"You want me to crawl?" Ginny gaped.

"It's actually a good idea, if you listen to me. See, if you crawl, then your arms are supporting your body with your legs. It will take a lot of work for your arms to drag your whole body, especially those lifeless legs of yours, and eventually, you will force your legs to move to help you crawl."

"That's not how it works, is it?"

"I don't think so. But before you think I don't know what I'm doing, I have worked with almost a hundred patients, some worse than you, some younger than you. And I know what works and what doesn't."

"So I'm going to crawl?"

"No, not today. I want you, today, to get on the floor."

She helped Ginny out of the chair and onto the ground, lying on her stomach.

"Use your arms to force your body up."

Ginny unbent her elbows, as if doing a pushup, and found that her torso was up, but her legs were still static on the ground. She closed her eyes and told herself to stay like that, not give up.

"Excellent. Now push yourself to your knees."

"What?" Ginny blurted, shocked.

"Push yourself to your knees. C'mon, you can do it."

Ginny sighed and pushed her arms up, falling back into her prostrate position seconds later. She found the floor was, indeed, under the cushioning charm.

"Try again. You can do this, Ginny."

She tried again, just to fall forward again. "Damn it!" She mumbled.

"It's okay, Ginny. You're not going to do anything right the first day. If you do, you're my hero."

Ginny grinned at this. She remembered her brothers and sister—her heroes—were in Hogwarts, and assumed, based on the letter, that Hermione was worrying about her. What better to prove to them that she was doing okay than having results from physical therapy on the first day? Willpower surged up in her, and she pushed herself up. This time, when she fell, she caught herself and pushed back up until

she was back at her knees. The cushioned floor helped with the bounce.

One.

She took in the sight of Capio's face. It was a mix of fear, shock, and delight.

Two.

She could feel herself getting unbalanced, but she willed herself to stay still. Baby steps, she remembered. One baby step at a time. Well, give her a rattle and a pacifier, because she was making progress.

Three.

But of course, progress is a general term, she realized as she had to place an arm out to the side to stabilize herself. She knew the floor was cushioned, but that didn't stop her from thinking she was going to get hurt. Nonetheless, her arms stayed to the side, and did not go onto the floor. She was balancing.

Four.

And then she was face down on the floor. Her arms were shaking, her spine was aching, and her lungs begged for air, her mouth moving quickly to meet the terms. She suddenly felt herself being lifted and placed back in the chair.

"That was great, Ginny! Blimey, that was almost ten seconds!"

"Almost," Ginny panted. "But not. It's pathetic, Capio, I can barely breathe, my muscles hurt, my bones hurt, it's like I just ran a marathon and all I did was keep my balance on my knees for nearly ten seconds!"

Then she realized.

"I counted four," She told her. Capio titled her head.

“You did?”

“Did you lie to me?”

“No, honestly, you were up for nine seconds! I was counting out loud, didn’t you hear me? ‘Ten’ was on the tip of my tongue when you fell; I had even begun to say the ‘t.’ Why would I lie to you about your progress in physical therapy?”

“You were counting out loud? Why didn’t I hear you?”

“I don’t know,” Capio said. “But that’s not the point. The point is that you made fantastic progress on your first day! I’m so proud of you, Ginny!”

“It was like nine seconds!” Ginny exclaimed. “Nine seconds balancing on my knees and that’s something to cheer about? I don’t want that to be something to cheer about!”

Capio took Ginny’s hand. “That’s why you’re here. You’re here because once you go through a few months of this, it will be nothing to cheer about. For you, walking will be like it is for the rest of your family.”

“How long at the most?” Ginny asked, her eyes closed.

“A year,” Capio said. “I know you’ll be in Hogwarts then, but I promise you. By this time next year, you’ll be able to spend at least four hours straight standing up and walking around before you collapse. I absolutely promise you, Ginny.”

She nodded and sighed. “At Christmas,” she said. “I stood up in my wheelchair. I used my arm to support myself, and I put a bauble on the tree. At most it was three seconds I was on my legs, and even then most of my weight was on my arm. And everyone was so—proud of me, so happy.” She let out a small, airy chuckle. “I spent the rest of the night sleeping, it wore me out so much.”

“What a way to spend your holiday,” Capio snorted.

“Can I try something?” Ginny asked.

“Ginny, this is your recovery, not mine. These are your sessions, not mine. You can do whatever you want.”

Ginny nodded and put her hands on the arms of the chair. They were gripping tight, ashen because of it. She pushed herself up so she was standing.

Why is this easier than balancing on my knees?

And then she fell. But unlike last time, she fell slightly to the side. Unlike last time, she was the only person steering herself. Unlike last time, she fell over the wheel, which sent the chair crashing toward Capio, who could not move fast enough.

Then, Ginny screamed.

Blood was coating Capio’s shin where she hit it on the wheelchair. It was falling, slowly, carefully...

Flash. Molly, eyes closed, covered in blood. Dripping from her collar, where the injury was obscured by the sticky substance.

Flash. Arthur, lying on the ground, a knife in his stomach, with blood covering his whole body, his eyes vacant and blank.

Flash. Hermione, bruised, beaten, and nothing but skin on her skeleton, her throat slit open and her eyes forever empty.

Flash. The twins, a bloody mess from head to toe, identical even in their gore.

Flash. Ron, blood coating his face, coloring it a deeper red than any Weasley could ever pull off in their most embarrassing, angry moment.

Flash. Bill, staggering around, trying to fight the attacker and get his family to safety with wounds of his own.

Flash. Charlie, dashing to help Bill, but with his face and arm buried by blood.

Flash. Percy, a large hole in his glasses, blood pouring from it.

Flash. Harry, a knife in his forehead, right where his scar was, but a new scar was to form...

"Ginny!"

"THEY'RE DEAD, THEY'RE ALL DEAD!"

XoXoX

"Something must be done," Arthur said. "She can't keep going like this Molly! We can't keep letting this happen!"

"What are we to do, Arthur, she doesn't want therapy!"

"And why not? What else will help her? What does she think is going to happen?"

"I don't know, Arthur, honestly I don't know, now would you just calm down!" Molly roared. Arthur stopped and turned to her.

"Usually I'm the one saying that to you."

"Because usually I'm the one that's throwing a fit!"

Arthur sighed. "So what do we do?"

"We start," Molly said, picking up a quill and getting parchment from the drawer. "By writing Hermione."

XoXoX

"This is it, I can't stay here anymore," Hermione said. She stood up just to find two arms on hers; the other three were on the other side of the table, standing in their spots to try to stop her. Ron and Harry pulled her back onto the bench.



"You can't help her, Hermione," Harry told her. "She needs to be away from you to get better. Honestly."

"She needs me, Harry."

"She needs to know you're okay," Harry said. "But she doesn't need to see you to know it."

"Have you met Ginny?"

"She wants to see you, she wants hard evidence that you exist. But that doesn't mean you should give it to her. I want a parakeet, but that doesn't mean Molly and Arthur should start shopping for cages."

"Are you comparing my life to a parakeet?"

"Hermione!"

"Okay, fine!" Hermione conceded. "I'm only listening to you because I don't know how I would go about getting to the Burrow anyway."

"That's the spirit," Fred mumbled.

A/n Longest chapter yet! That's a treat for you because I AM HAPPY!! I wrote this whole chapter in an hour, so I hope it's good.

As for Hermione's letter to Ginny...you'll find out what it says soon enough. As well as more of Capio.

On another note, this story belongs to TWENTY communities and has almost four hundred reviews. For some of you, that might seem like, well, Tuesday, but think. I'm a thirteen year old girl who writes fanfiction on the side of a ridiculously large amount of homework and annoying teachers. I started writing it because one of my language teachers in sixth grade said I'd be great at it. Any response is a big deal for me.

I am protesting the yearbook. I covered the whole outside with black Sharpie and wrote in silver 'THIS BOOK IS CRUEL TO

XANTHOPHOBES.' If you know what that means, then you must know that it is the most obnoxious shade I've ever seen! But the whole yearbook staff for next year are people I know, so I'm cool.

Now I will be enjoying summer. Please do the same. Love you!

Signing off, and this is Truth.

A/n I'd like to dedicate this chapter to Tim Russert, who died this afternoon while I was celebrating the fact that I'd never have to deal with Mr. Hall again for the rest of my life. Mr. Russert was an excellent reporter, author, and all together great person, and the world should be proud to have had him for the fifty-eight years it did. His additions every night to MSNBC, along with those of Keith Olbermann and Rachel Maddow, helped me understand politics all the better. Tonight I hope the best for his family and mourn this tragic death.

Ginny sat in bed, thinking of the day's physical therapy. Why, why had she not heard Capiro counting? For that matter, why was she counting differently?

And then all those...images...the ones from her nightmares...just because of blood...but there was so much of it...

There was a knock on the door, and then Bill came in. He sat down on her bed and ran a hand through his hair.

"Mum told me about your therapy today," he said. "You okay?"

"There was blood pouring from her leg, Bill."

He looked at her, his eyebrows contracted in confusion. "Gin...there were only a couple beads. Mum says it wasn't even enough to cover an inch of skin."

Ginny snapped her head toward him, her eyes wide, her mouth open. "No...no, there was a lot of it! Bill, it was everywhere. And she was...she was bleeding, it was everywhere! And then I saw you and Charlie and Percy and Fred and George and Ron and Harry and Hermione and Mum and Dad and...it was all because of him...he—" She burst into tears. Bill's arms were soon wrapped around her, swaying her gently as he soothed her.

"Gin, Richard hurt you more than Lauren did, huh?"

Ginny cracked her knuckles, for some reason more furious at her brother in that moment than she had ever been at Bill. "Don't you call

them that. Don't call them by their first names like they're your friends! They're monsters! They don't deserve names, let alone to be referred to by them!"

If she did not despise the fact that "Richard" and "Lauren" had completely changed the lives of her whole family, she would have screamed this so loud that the rest of her family would have heard it, even those at Hogwarts. But she did despise it, so she chickened out.

"Yeah," she whispered, her voice cracking even though.

XoXoX

Hermione tied the letter to Hedwig and sent him off. She paced the Owlery for a few moments before walking out, her breath slow and heavy. She went down to the Gryffindor common room, meeting Harry and Ron on the way down.

"Aren't you coming to dinner, Hermione?" Ron asked.

"I can't eat," Hermione said. Harry groaned and took her arm.

"That's it!" He said, pulling her back through the portrait hole and into a chair in the corner.

"What's your problem, Harry?"

"No, Hermione, what your problem? I understand you're worried about Ginny, but for Merlin's sake stop torturing yourself over it! One of the reasons she's in such a bad way is because she's worried about you. How you are taking all this. What might happen to you. You're dipping back into the Sir and Ma'am Chronicles when you should be celebrating!"

"What's there to celebrate, our sister almost died!"

"But she's alive now and in no danger of death! She's going to physical therapy to help her walk, she's on some weirdo regimen to help her get back to a healthy weight, she's trying to get her life back together and all you're doing is moping and focusing on the bad

things! We both know that the nightmares will stop, Hermione! You had them, I had them, and now Ginny has them, but we know exactly what they are about and we know from experience that they will stop! So just stop it! Stop worrying about her!”

Hermione stood up. “She needs me! I’m the only one who can convince her to get the help she needs!”

“Be that as it may, Molly is there!” Harry roared, sending Hermione back into the chair. “Molly helped us! Molly saved us from what could have killed us, she took us in when she didn’t have to, when she barely had the money to! She taught us what was right and what was wrong and was patient and caring about all the horrible habits we had picked up! She was more tolerant than she should have been, she was more caring than anyone would ever expect, and she loved us like she gave birth to us from the moment she met us! Are you trying to tell me she won’t have the same effect on Ginny as she did on us? She stopped our nightmares! She fed us ten helpings every meal and tucked us in every night and showed us more love than we had ever known existed!”

“Well maybe—”

“Maybe what?”

“Maybe Ginny is different than us!” It was the only argument she had in that gigantic brain of hers, which meant that Harry was right, so right that she was now considering herself the most stupid person on Earth. Of course Ginny was different than them. She knew that her family loved her from the beginning. She had always known love. She had spent all her time protecting. Her entire situation was different than theirs.

“OF COURSE SHE IS!” Harry yelled. Whoever was in the common room looked over at them to find out what the problem was. “She’s a thousand times different! That doesn’t matter! That doesn’t mean that it is going to be any more difficult to help her understand what she thinks isn’t right! It took us weeks, months! You’re expecting her to be perfect immediately! You still can’t look at anyone when you’re nervous or scared or angry or upset! You have to wait for everyone to

have started eating before you can! When you talk to people older than you, you speak at the speed of light or sometimes not at all! And no matter what you expect to get punished severely for whatever you do wrong! You've had four years to heal! Why are you expecting Ginny to heal in four weeks?"

"Because she's not supposed to be this way!" Hermione cried, tears racing down her face. "She's not supposed to know what it's like to have to go through this kind of convalescence! Do you know how hard I've worked the last four years to keep my sister safe? She's one of the most important things in my life! I felt more love for her in those first two months than I had ever felt before! And I can't stand to know that I'm here and she's there and she's suffering and it's because of those...things that she is! And it hurts even more to know that those things were once called my parents!"

She collapsed against the wall, burying her face in her hands, sobbing. Harry placed his hand on her shoulder, but she flinched and he pulled back. Ron was off ushering all the people away from his sister, mumbling about privacy and whatnot. Harry pried Hermione's hands from her face, and she was shaking like mad as she looked down at the table, skillfully avoiding his eyes. He, however, deftly—too deftly if you asked any of his brothers—looked straight into her eyes at an angle at which it was impossible for her to look away other than to close her eyes, which she did immediately.

"Hermione, you know that while they may have given birth to you, you are not their daughter. They are not your family. We are your family. Ginny is your sister, and she loves you. She knows that you aren't their daughter. Why can't you realize it? Why can't you, the smartest Weasley of them all, realize that you aren't their daughter when it's so clear to the rest of us? Why can't you realize that they aren't now and never were your family?"

"I don't know."

Harry placed his hand on her cheek and felt a weight lifting off his shoulders when she opened her eyes and stayed perfectly still. "Perhaps you should find out."

XoXoX

Dear Ginny,

We got to Hogwarts perfectly fine. All of us are safe and sound.

I just wanted to tell you that I'm always here. If you ever want to talk, I'm just an owl away. You never have to worry about me. I am safe here at Hogwarts when Dumbledore is here. No one can hurt me even if they wanted to. Hogwarts is just about the safest place on the planet.

Love in all shapes, sizes, and forms,

Hermione

Compared to:

Ginny,

Are you okay? Please, please, please get therapy, Ginny. You really need it. I know you think that it will be horrible, but in the end it will help you. All those horrible things will be worth it. Please, Ginny, I'm begging you, just go to a few sessions. Please.

Love,

Hermione

Ginny tightened her grip around herself. Her arms were hugging her chest. She felt empty. Even Hermione thought she needed therapy. She wasn't crazy. She didn't need it. She would get over this herself. No therapy.

It was the first time she ever intentionally defied Hermione on such a big request. She felt bad about it. She loved her sister more than she loved her life. Why would you want to change that? Nothing ever could, nothing ever would. They had basically promised each other that. Sisters before anything else. Friends before anything else.

But they never made a promise to each other that they would honor each other's requests. That kind of went without saying, but since they never really had said it...she could...

She could not believe she was trying to find a way to con her sister. She was scum. Complete, total scum.

But the one thing she did not want was therapy. She did not want to sit in a chair as someone told her how to fix her problems. She wanted to fix her problems herself. She didn't want to have to tell everything about everything to some bloke she didn't even know. That wasn't going to help her. It wasn't going to help her in the least bit. Why did everyone insist it would? She didn't want to see a therapist. That was that.

Of course, she was ten years old? What did she know?

Or at least, that's what was probably going through everyone's mind. Didn't she prove what she knew when she verbally smacked Malfoy across the face? Didn't she prove what she knew when she lived through two months of total torture, abuse, and mistreatment because she wanted to protect her family? Hadn't she proved what she knew the last few months? Or was that not enough for people? Did they need more proof?

What possible relief could come through spilling your guts to someone you didn't know? It didn't make sense to her.

Sighing, she looked out the window. The sun was high in the sky. She got in her chair and went downstairs. It hadn't been since she was kidnapped that she went outside all by herself. There was a first time for everything wasn't there?

Molly was in the kitchen. That was good. It took the edge off of the anxiety Ginny felt. The last time she had gone outside alone, she had gone through seemingly endless pain and torture. It helped her know that she might be safe to have Molly there to see if she got hurt.

"Mum, I'm going to go outside. Alone," she specified. Molly looked at her a second, then nodded. A moment of silent communication



passed between the two. They were both scared. They both knew it, too.

She went outside. There was still a little snow on the ground, but it was easy to get around, even in her wheelchair. She breathed in the fresh, cold air. The cold burned her nose, but she welcomed it. She had been having horrible fevers lately. The cold was something she had not felt in a long time. She absorbed it like it was a completely new phenomenon.

The sun was poking only slightly through the clouds now. But the air in between the ground and the sky was cold. Ice cold. It was January, all right, there was no denying that. Time had moved at a pace she didn't notice. She didn't register that every night as she fell asleep she was saying goodbye forever to another day. Her whole life time had never mattered to her. Now it seemed the most important thing in the world. She feared she wouldn't have enough of it. She feared she had wasted valuable time in those days she was being held captive.

It had never mattered to her before that every midnight, she was not only saying hello to a new day, but goodbye to a day she would never see again. She never cared much that each second held another event that would never change. It hadn't mattered to her before.

But now that she knew the importance of every day, of every hour, of every minute, of every second, she cared about it all. Each day was made up of hours. Each hour was made of minutes. Each minute was made of seconds. Each second was made of a breath. A heartbeat. Each breath, each heartbeat helped keep someone, something alive. Each second kept someone alive. Each second you lived was another thing to be happy about.

They say life is short. And it is if you look at it in years. In months. But what if you look at it in minutes? In seconds? Ginny knew that anyone would be surprised to know that if they lived to age eighty, they were in fact living for two billion, five hundred twenty-four million, five hundred fifty-four thousand, eighty seconds. Almost forty-three million minutes. Ginny would be ecstatic to live that long. Life was not short. Life was incredibly long. It was the longest thing any human could know, so why was everyone complaining?

Because life was not short. It was full of surprises. You never knew when you were going to die. And that's what scared people. That's why people thought it was short. It was not short in the sense that it would be over in a flash, it was short in the sense that it could be over in a flash. It was short in the sense of what-ifs and could-bes and it's-possibles. Not many people realized how much those little things ruled your life, your decisions.

Ginny had heard a lot of similes for life in her ten years. Life is like a box of chocolates; you never know what you're gonna get. Life is like a pecan pie; there's a lot of nuts in there. Life is like a jar of jalapenos; you never know when it's gonna burn your ass. Life is like a birthday cake; short and sweet, and you don't always get your wish.

She figured all of those were true in a way.

With a sigh of contentment, she rolled through the snow down to the lake by their property. They had one on their property, but it just wasn't the same as that lake. When they were little, all the Weasleys children used to skate on that lake every winter. Ginny loved it.

She heard a rustle in the bushes and a quiet voice. Her body tensed, her hands gripping the wheels of her chair. She backed up a little.

"Who's there?" she asked, her knuckles white on the wheels of her chair and her eyes wide. She was focusing all her strength into her arms for a quick getaway if needed.

A girl popped up from the bushes. She had dirty blonde hair and large, pale, and slightly bulged eyes. They flickered to Ginny's chair and her head tilted.

"Hello, Ginny," she said in a singsong voice.

"Luna?" Ginny said, her hands off the wheels of her chair. She smiled. "I haven't seen you in a long time."

It had, in fact, been almost two years since they had seen each other. The last time they had seen each other was at Mrs. Lovegood's

funeral. After that, Luna and her father, Xenophilius, had grown distant from the rest of society. Mr. Lovegood's magazine, The Quibbler, had continued with the wishes of Mrs. Lovegood, but Ginny had not seen either of them since she gave them the best of her wishes when she was eight years old and Luna was nine.

Luna nodded to the chair, not acknowledging Ginny's statement. "I heard of the accident."

Accident. It was such a strange word to use to refer to it. Ginny simply shrugged. "I'm better now."

Luna smiled. "Both my parents were Ravenclaws, Ginny, as will I be. Even if I had not gone through my mother's death, I would know you are not better."

Ginny blinked and tilted her head. "I'm better than I was a month and a half ago," she volunteered. Luna shook her head.

"That may be true, but it is not the full facts of it all."

"What are you doing out here?" Ginny blurted suddenly, trying to change the subject. Luna did not seem to mind. She answered her question with no chagrin of not being told the truth.

"My father said there may be some Ribbon-Eared Fidsnuffers out here at this time of year. I was searching."

Ginny sighed. If she remembered anything about Luna, it was that. She had been raised on knowledge that ridiculous, out-of-this-world creatures lived around every corner. And it was hard to give up that kind of thing. All the time, though, Ginny had welcomed it. She did not make fun of Luna like most did. She was just different. It wasn't technically her fault she believed these things. It was her parents' fault. When you're raised in a certain environment, you expect the world to be in that environment too. It just so happened Luna liked her environment and didn't care much to give it up once she found out that things were different.

She had figured, at a young age, that Luna was brought to her as a friend because the girl needed someone to prove to her that the world could be accepting.

“Do you need help?” Ginny asked.

Luna looked at her for a long moment. “If you feel up to it.”

Ginny shrugged. “Sure. What do they look like?”

“Large snouts.”

“Snouts.”

“Long, curly ears, and thick, dark noses.”

“Long curly ears, thick dark noses, got it.”

“Their heads will be the size of about a Quaffle, but their bodies are only the size of your hand. They will have thirteen legs, five on each side and three on its back in case it flips over from the strange weight distribution of such a large head.”

“Color?”

“Most will be green, but some are purple.”

“Like forest green or lime green?”

“Emerald,” Luna said.

“And what purple?”

“Well, really it’s more like lavender,” Luna said. Ginny nodded.

“And where will these large-snouted, curly-eared, thick-nosed, thirteen-legged creatures with ridiculously large heads in comparison to small bodies that could be emerald or quite possibly lavender be?” Ginny asked.

“In the bushes, but if you want to save your breath, you can call them Ribbon-Eared Fidsnuffers.”

“Ribbon-Eared Fidsnuffers, okay,” Ginny said, leaning forward to look in the bushes for these creatures.

XoXoX

Molly was starting to panic. Ginny left the yard two hours ago and she wasn't back yet. Arthur would be coming home soon, and she didn't want to have Ginny gone when her husband came home.

Or at least, that's what she told herself.

So she stepped out into the yard and walked in the direction Ginny had gone. She did not say anything and tried to make little sound. The latter was because she did not want to scare Ginny if she was there, and the former because she did not want to not hear Ginny answer.

When she heard Ginny laughing, though, she was relieved. Then she was curious, and quite possibly nosy. What would Ginny be laughing about?

“Then Daddy told him that he only printed the truth in The Quibbler and that if he wanted him to print lies than he should have asked the Daily Prophet,” a girl's voice said in a very jovial, rhythmic way. Ginny laughed again. Molly looked out from behind a tree to find the two girls looking in the bushes for something, moving around leaves and lifting up branches and peeking through. Ginny was perched oddly at the end of the seat in her wheelchair, scanning the top halves of the bushes while the other girl, who Molly recognized as Ginny's old friend Luna Lovegood, searched the bottom half.

“Find any yet?” Ginny asked Luna.

“No,” Luna said. “Though I think I do see the droppings of a Spiny Kinson.”

“That seems promising,” Ginny said.

Molly smiled to herself and sneaked away, back to the house, trying to make as little noise as possible until she was far away from where the girls were. She continued to smile as she walked into the kitchen and started making dinner. Ginny hadn't seen Luna Lovegood since the latter's mother died. It was a very tragic thing, and it had very much changed both Luna and Xenophilius Lovegood. They used to be at every event, visiting every other day, talking lively and loudly about whatever strange creatures were being featured in The Quibbler that week. It was very annoying as it happened, but later they found it was very strange and rather annoying to not be hearing the banter about Crumpled-Horned Snorkacks and Blibbering Humdingers.

"Hey, Mollywobbles," Arthur said, closing the door behind him.

"Hello, Arthur, how was work?"

"Very work-like. Where's Ginny?"

Molly smiled to herself, turning to Arthur only to widen her smile at his look of confusion. "She's with a friend."

A/n Thanks to Alorkin for the idea of Luna Lovegood.

Signing off, and this is Truth.

Disclaimer! Roses are red, violets are blue. I don't own Harry Potter, but what's it to you?

A/n Okay, so I've been having good concerts lately. I met William Beckett at Warped Tour Ventura, which means I can cross another hot guy off my 'I need their autograph' list. I saw Motion City Soundtrack last Saturday night, which means I can say that I have seen live in concert at least one person from each of my top five bands. Motion City I saw the fourteenth. Jimmy Eat World I saw all by themselves, they played for like three hours and played all my favorite songs. Fall Out Boy I've seen four times, once I met them all and got pictures and autographs, once I created a fake I.D. for my brother's high school to say I was sixteen when I was really twelve. XD. Green Day, well, I saw Billie Joe with Pinhead Gunpowder once and met him and got his autograph (I was very proud of myself, because I didn't crap my pants). I saw Sum 41 at Warped Tour last year.

And now, if you actually took your time to read all of that, I'm surprised. If that all meant something to you, let's talk music sometime. If not, then that was just me trying to explain in music geek that I'm excited. Enjoy the chapter. Sorry it took so long, but I couldn't find the incentive to write. Hopefully that changes.

"Maybe you just see everything much worse than it is," Luna suggested.

"How do you suppose that?"

"Well both your mother and your brother told you that Capio barely bled at all, but you thought she was gushing and needed a replenishing potion. You thought that you had only stayed up for four seconds, but really it was nine. You want everything to be worse than it is."

"That's very observant for an eleven-year-old girl," Ginny snapped. Luna shrugged, unabashed.

"Maybe," Luna said. "but it's quite on the surface."

Ginny turned her head toward Luna. "I have my next physical therapy appointment today."

Luna picked up a handful of snow and crushed it in her hand. They were lying on their backs in the snow, covered in the stuff, talking and looking up at the clouds. For the last five days they had met in the clearing that they had reacquainted in and talked or played as best they could. Luna was very patient and accepting in the fact that Ginny could only do so much without getting tired out, and especially in the fact that she couldn't do much in her "stupid wheelchair," as Ginny had taken to calling it away from her family.

Luna turned to her. "Do well for me."

XoXoX

"Your work has been getting worse and worse, Ronald," Hermione scolded him half-heartedly as she looked over and saw he got a D on his Potions essay.

Snape gave her a strange look as he set down her essay, upside down, in front of her. Then he scowled at the three of them and walked off, chucking Harry's essay onto his desk. Harry glared at his back and shoved the essay into his bag without looking at it. When the bell rang, they were the first three out the door to dinner.

Ron looked over to see Hermione still had her essay clenched in her hand. He nodded to it.

"What did you get, Hermione? Top marks again?" he laughed. Harry smiled at her, and she made a twitchy movement somewhere between a nod and a shrug. He raised an eyebrow.

"What's wrong, Hermione?" Harry asked quietly. Hermione shook her head.

"Nothing."

"You're lying. What's the matter?"



“I said it’s nothing, Harry, why would I lie to you?” Hermione snapped, moving her bag in front of her and unzipping it to place her essay inside. Harry snatched the parchment from her hands with the speed of a Seeker. “Give that back, Harry. I told you it’s nothing, don’t you believe me?”

“Not really.”

“Why would I lie to you?” She reiterated.

“Probably because I would get angry with you, and since I’ve already had one or two public outbursts at you in the last week, you didn’t want to risk another,” he volunteered, looking at the essay.

There it was. At the top of her paper, a big, bright letter. It was in Snape’s hurried, apathetic handwriting that always gave them the impression he didn’t even really read most of your essay, just skimmed it and graded it that way. Or, in Harry’s case, picked the lowest number out of five random ones that popped into his head.

“H-Her—Hermione, you only got an A!” Ron breathed. “Your essay only got acceptable!”

Harry’s jaw was square. His eyes were wide and fiery. Taking a deep breath, his hand crushed the side of the parchment, shoved it into Ron’s chest, and grabbed Hermione’s arm, pulling her outside the front doors of the castle.

“What’s wrong with you, Hermione?”

“I don’t know what you’re talking about,” she mumbled, kicking a circle in the snow with the tip of her trainer. Her hands were shoved in the pockets of her robe to warm them, and they were pressing the two sides of her robe closer together.

“You would never ever, ever settle with an A on your essay, no matter what subject it was. You would be panicking. Now I want to know why you let this happen,” he fumed. “Tell me or I’m writing Ginny!”

Hermione tensed and Harry knew he was right on. "So it is about her, then?"

She didn't say anything for a minute or so, and then she murmured, "And if it is?"

"How stupid are you, Hermione?!"

"It's because of me she had to go through all this, Harry, they wanted me! They wanted to kill me, to torture me, to abuse and starve me! Not her!"

"Well it isn't your fault they got a hold of her instead of you! It isn't your fault Ginny's a smartass! It isn't your fault that she wanted to protect you and it sure as hell isn't your fault that she went through all this! They weren't Obliviated correctly! They weren't wired correctly from the start of their lives! None of this is your fault, Hermione, and I refuse to stand here as you pretend it is! So either stop bathing in your woes and sorrow and wallowing in self-pity or I'm writing Ginny and Molly and telling them that not only did you break your promise to Ginny that you wouldn't worry about her, but you're letting your worrying affect your schoolwork."

"What is it any of your business how I do in school?" Hermione asked, looking at the snow.

"I'm your brother, Hermione, and I know this isn't you! You would never let yourself get only an A on any assignment, even if it was Potions! You're driving me mad! You're not focusing on anything but how Ginny might be doing, you barely sleep, you barely eat, you spend every single second worrying about Ginny when you should be worrying about yourself! Even now that Luna is helping her, you continue to obsess over her and you have it cemented in your head that it is your duty to help Ginny and do nothing else, and that she is in a horrible state no matter how she actually is! You're not yourself, Hermione, and until you're back to the Hermione I know and love," he paused dramatically, backing up toward the castle steps. "you're a stranger to me."

He turned and started up the steps. Hermione looked up, panicked, and ran after him. "Harry? Harry! Harry James Potter, get back here this second! HARRY!"

She squeezed through the closing doors just in time to see Harry walking away from where Ron was standing. "Harry?" He didn't turn around. "Ron? Ron, we have to go get Harry. Ron? Ron!"

Ron stared at her for a moment, looking a mixture between confused and disappointed, and then walked off in the direction of Harry.

Fuming, she bounded up the steps to Gryffindor Tower. All the Weasley brothers were there, and Harry was walking up the steps to his dormitory. "Harry! Harry!"

He didn't turn around. She ran up the steps after him and grabbed his shoulder, whipping him around. His eyes widened as he looked at her.

"You're not supposed to be up here," he said, turning back around and heading toward his dormitory again. She was frozen with shock, and did not go after him, nor did she speak at all. Instead, once the shock wore off, she turned around and walked down the stairs, into the near empty common room. Everyone was at dinner, unless your last name was Weasley or Potter. The Weasley brothers were all crowded around the fire, mumbling in hushed tones, with grave looks on their faces. Even Percy had gotten off his imaginary throne and stopped petting his imaginary kitten to participate in the conversation of his...shudder...brothers.

"Can one of you please talk some sense into Harry?" she blurted suddenly, much louder than she had anticipated. They all jumped, turned to her, and then turned back to each other to exchange confused looks. Then they shrugged, stood, and dispersed. All of them walked straight past her and out the portrait hole, leaving her standing alone in the common room, the fire crackling in front of her. Dropping her bookbag unceremoniously on the floor, she fell suddenly to her knees, her eyes fixed on the flame fingers as they clenched around the air. Her chin quivered, her shoulders shook, and tears flew down her face.

“Love? No one loves you, you insolent idiot! No one loves you and no one will ever. You are worthless. And everyone but you seems to know it. You will spend the rest of your life alone; alone and unloved. Now stop looking at me.”

They were right.

She was alone.

XoXoX

“Damn it!” Ginny grunted out of habit. Another habit she had to get out of. She believed her mother was just at breaking point with her constant swearing, just being kind and pretending not to be bothered by it. “It’s so easy. I’ve been doing it for nearly ten years. Why can’t I just do this one little goddamn thing?”

“Don’t get upset with yourself, Ginny,” Capiro said. “You’re doing amazing. Remember what I said last week? If you manage to move even twenty centimeters today you’re my hero.”

A centimeter never seemed so long as when she had to learn to crawl it. She couldn’t budge her waist enough to move a nanometer. “I am making absolutely no progress, Capiro.”

“You will, Ginny,” she said softly. “Don’t rush it. I promised you that you would walk onto the Hogwarts Express in September. I’m not one to break promises. If you don’t walk onto the train, then I will quit my job.”

“Capiro, you don’t have to promise anything, I’m just—”

“That was to tell you how serious I am. You are not going to make any progress at all if you keep telling yourself you aren’t making progress. So far, you’ve managed to at least recognize that you have legs, rather than thinking gravity wasn’t working too well. That’s amazing for one day.”

“You said if I moved twenty centimeters today,” Ginny mumbled, ignoring Capiro’s last words. “that I was your hero.”

Capio laughed. "Yeah, I said that."

"Well, start worshipping," Ginny said, and she pushed herself forward. Capio watched, smiling, as Ginny inched forward, apparently not even trying to use her legs at all. After what seemed like way too long to Ginny, she collapsed onto the ground, panting. "How far?"

Capio looked and estimated. "I'd say twenty-three."

"Good," Ginny panted. "Because I can't move."

Capio laughed, picked her up, and carried her over to her wheelchair. "Let's take a break. How's your meal plan going? It felt like you gained an gram or two."

"Hilarious. Let me take a minute to stop laughing before I answer your question," Ginny scoffed. "For your information I've gained a kilogram since I've left the hospital."

"What? That was more than a month ago! Do you have some condition where you can't gain weight?"

"I must have been a fat baby," she mumbled. "So, Capio. You know a lot about me from reading my file. Unfortunately, you don't have a file. What's life like in the world of Linda Capio?"

She cringed. "I was hoping you wouldn't remember my first name."

"Photographic memory. Comes in handy most of the time, but regrettably I don't care for it much lately. But don't avoid my question. I know you have a son, but what's his name?"

The woman sat on the ground and smiled. "Virto. My husband insisted it be something Latin. Now he has a Latin first name and family name," she sighed, then shrugged. "I would have been fine with the name Josh."

Ginny laughed. "I like the name Virto. It comes from Virtus, right? Meaning courage and excellence?"

Capio raised an eyebrow. "You know Latin?"

She laughed again. "No, one of my million relatives does, I don't even know which one. They tried to teach me to make me their spitting image like so many before them have, but I only bothered to spend any of my time with a few words. Virtus was one of them, because it reminded me of Gryffindor."

"You're going to be in Gryffindor?"

She snorted. "Every single Weasley and Prewett alike have been in Gryffindor for generations. I doubt I'll be any different."

Capio shrugged. "Haven't you already proven yourself different by being the first girl born to the Weasley family for...how many generations? You're different, Ginny. You don't know where you'll end up."

"It's not like I mind being in Gryffindor," she shrugged. "That's where all my brothers and Hermione will be. I guess...it's just going to be hard going anywhere with people knowing what I went through. Because I know that as soon as I forget everything, I'll go to Hogwarts and be reminded with every step I take."

"I can't very well promise the whole of that will be untrue. But what I can promise is that those last three words will be true. The least I can do for you is get you to be able to run away from the annoying people who want to remind you of your suffering."

Ginny laughed. "All right. Thank you."

"Though I do want one thing in return. I know, I'm selfish, but it's something I really want."

"What would that be, Capio?" Ginny asked slyly.

Capio looked around clandestinely and leaned in closer. "Gain some weight, kiddo."

XoXoX

Hermione never did go down to dinner that night. She sat on her bed, drew the curtains around her, and cast the best silence and locking spells she could muster up in her age and state. Based on the fact that her hand was shaking a mile a minute, she doubted either of them worked, but it was worth a try.

What was wrong with Harry? Why had he told all the Weasleys to ignore her just because of one little slip? She wasn't allowed to make any mistakes? It's not like she got a D or anything, she just got the lowest passing grade possible. That's not any big deal. When Ron got an A, everyone celebrated. And that time he got an E they wrote Molly and waited for the apocalypse. So why was her one little A such a big deal? It wasn't like it was a test or anything, just a stupid essay.

Harry was just being stupid. He was being overly protective of her and making a mountain out of a molehill. She really wished he would stop doing that all the time. She didn't need to be protected. She didn't want to be protected. And she was just fine without his help. So why was he always so paranoid about her? Why was he always making sure she kept her grades up and ate well and didn't get depressed? Why did he consider her his responsibility?

Sure, they had more in common with each other than with the rest of their siblings, but that's no reason why he should immediately be her caretaker. Sure, they both went through similar situations, but that doesn't mean he can always butt into her life and try to protect her. It was her life and she thought she was doing just fine without his help. And here he was, trying to tell her who she was supposed to be. 'The Hermione I know...' What's that supposed to mean exactly? Who was the Hermione he knew? And who's to say that Hermione was better? Ron was always complaining about the old Hermione and now...and now Harry had forbade him from speaking to her so she had no idea whatsoever how he felt about the 'new' Hermione.

Harry was so annoying sometimes! Always pretending he knew what was best for her, like he was the only person who could take care of her! She couldn't even describe how much that bothered her! Sometimes she just wanted to scream. He was her sibling, probably

the sibling she was closest too, but how was she supposed to just let him act this way?

It annoyed her beyond words.

XoXoX

“So remind me again, Harry. Why exactly are we avoiding Hermione at all costs and pretending like she doesn’t exist?” George asked at dinner that night. Harry sighed.

“Because she is being very childish.”

Fred’s lips twitched into a smile. “Harry, isn’t this plan rather childish in and of itself?”

“Well, Fred, I really don’t know what else to do! Do you have a better plan?”

Percy shrugged. “We could write Mum and Dad and have them tell Ginny.”

Harry shook his head. “No, you see, that’s my threat. You can’t actually carry out the threat or else it takes away the importance of it.”

The four redheads exchanged looks and then shook their heads before turning back to Harry. All at the same time, they said, “You’re mad, Harry.”

He sighed. “I know you think so, but I can’t let Hermione do this anymore. She can’t just spend her whole life living Ginny’s life. Nothing that happened in those two months was Hermione’s fault. She can’t help who she came from. And I won’t let her vicariously suffer for Ginny’s sake, nor will I let her become so protective and meddling.”

Fred raised an eyebrow and exchanged a look with George. “Harry?”

“Don’t you, I don’t know, kinda think that you may be doing the same to Hermione?”



“You’re being rather protective and meddling, trying to vicariously suffer for Hermione.”

“Ever thought you’re being no better than her, rather her exactly?”

Harry smirked and sat back, stabbing his fork into a boiled potato and bringing his leg up to the bench to sit on. “Ever thought that’s exactly what I’m trying to do?”

A/n You have absolutely no idea how hard it was to write that chapter in with the fact that every single word I wrote seemed stupider than the last. So sorry if it sucks, and sorry that it’s short. I had all these things planned to do, which probably made it harder. Because if I must confess, the whole situation with Ginny’s abduction? I had planned absolutely none of it. But I knew the Grangers had to come soon, and I originally just had an internal soliloquy where Ginny was sitting on the fence, but instead, I had a major plot point. Then I uploaded the chapter and realized what I had done.

If you ever go to Anime Expo, watch out for Man Faye!

Signing off, and this is Truth.

A/n I have an overwhelming and purely inexplicable need to dedicate this chapter to Max, my one and only brother—my one and only sibling for that matter. I love the dork to death.

“So, Harry, I’ve seen Hermione in the library a lot this month,” Ron said. “I think she might try again soon.”

“Maybe I’ll let her,” Harry mumbled uninterestedly. “She’s been doing better.”

“Harry, it’s been almost four months. She’s been doing a lot better. She’s back to her old self.”

Harry shook his head. “No. If she was back to her old self she would come back. She isn’t yet.”

“How long are you going to keep this up, Harry? This is ridiculous, I want my sister back!”

Harry stood up. “Yeah? Well so do I!”

XoXoX

“C’mon, Gin, you’re doing great. You can do this.”

Capio let go of Ginny’s hands. She took three steps before falling to the ground, grunting in frustration. Even though May was more than halfway done, Ginny was still as stubborn and angry as she had been in January. She refused to believe she was making steady progress and hated herself for falling when she thought she was going to make it another step. More than that she refused to leave her physical therapy sessions until she had made at least one meter of progress.

And Capio hated it.

“Let’s take a rest, Ginny,” she said. Ginny shook her head.

“No. I have to do this. It’s just a few more steps. I can make it,” she panted, trying to stand up.

“Yes, Ginny, those few more steps will still be there after you take a break. Stop working yourself so hard.”

“I can do this, Capiro,” Ginny said, looking up at her with her damned eyes. Capiro had wisely learned to despise those eyes with all of her heart, mind, and soul. Ginny pushed herself up and swayed slightly on her feet before falling sideways. With quick, Quidditch-player reflexes, Capiro caught her before she hit the ground and carried her over to her wheelchair. Ginny cursed under her breath but did not try to stand up.

“Let’s talk about something else, shall we? How’s that fear of blood going?”

“Horrendously. Do you know how many people bleed in everyday life? I’ve never realized how much of the stuff is in every corner of the bloody world.”

Capiro smiled. “Was that a pun?”

“Well it started out as an intensifier but I think it evolved into a rather dreadful pun, didn’t it?” she chuckled brokenly and very fake. Capiro looked at Ginny’s hands and lifted one up.

“A rather dreadful pun you seem quite shaken about,” she commented, gesturing to her violently trembling hands. With a sigh, she dropped Ginny’s hand and looked her in the eye. “You know, no one expects you to come out of this unscathed. You don’t have to try to get over every single little idiosyncrasy you developed in those horrible two months. This is going to be a long healing process. None of us like it, but it’s true. For more half your life you’ve been around two children who were heavily abused and mistreated for more than half their lives and you know that they are still trying to get over that. So what makes you think that you can have a miraculous recovery from all your fears and bad habits in four months?”

“Five months,” Ginny mumbled.

“Ginny,” she admonished. Ginny groaned.

“Yes, I know, but this is really hard for me. I’ve spent my whole life being protected a thousand times over. My whole life I’ve had a million hands to cover my eyes when things got scary, I’ve had a million hands to hold mine when confronting a fear, I’ve had a million hands to hug me when I go through something frightening and a million voices to tell me everything is going to be okay or that it was just a dream, and now when the worst happens...I keep expecting a hand to cover my eyes. I keep expecting a hand to hold mine and I keep expecting that hug. I keep expecting those million voices to tell me that none of it was real. And so far, I’m terrified that it isn’t. I’m terrified because there are no voices telling me it was just a dream, they’re just telling me that it’s over and it’s going to be okay, or they try to cover my eyes from something that I need to see, something that I need to get used to. And I’d love to apologize for being afraid, I’d love to apologize for wanting the hand to cover my eyes from the past, for wanting the voice to tell me it was a dream but unfortunately I’m fresh out of lies.”

Capio stared at Ginny. The latter was apparently quite known by her family for monologues and soliloquies that struck them speechless. And now the older woman had a taste of this. Screw speaking, she could barely breathe. The way Ginny had said it; so calm and quick, yet still forceful and meaningful.

“I imagine you’ve told a lot of lies recently. Lies that don’t seem to make a difference but really make a whole.”

Ginny tilted her head and looked at her with an unreadable expression. “I’m not okay, Capio.”

“What?”

“People ask me if I’m okay. They ask me how I’m doing. And I say yes. I say I’m fine. I say I’m great. I say I haven’t been better for a long time. Lies. All of them. Lies. I’m not okay. I’m not fine. I’m sure as hell not great. And though it may seem like the truth that I haven’t been better for a long time it’s not. Those first few days back from the hospital, those days over Christmas I was able to spend with my family, those were the best days I’ve had for a long, long time. And right now compared to that I might as well still be with those monsters.

So please excuse me if I can't always keep up the façade, but I try to do well for my mother and father and brothers and sister, that way I am not suffocated by all the hands trying to fight to cover my eyes the best."

Again. It was strange how her speech picked up speed as it went on. Other than that, her volume and tone never changed. She sounded rather equably angry, yet at the same time exploding with rage. It was very peculiar to witness, to listen to, and yet it was the most familiar sound ever. Capio did not know this, but this was the way that Ginny spoke to Harry and Hermione when she was upset. She did not yell. She spoke in this way, calm yet still emphasizing that she was angry and angry but still talking.

"I'm sorry."

"Let's just get back to work," Ginny mumbled.

XoXoX

Hermione sighed and turned the page. She had spent the last three months buried in books and becoming desensitized to the outside world. However she did make sure to be prompt for meals and to sleep a sufficient amount of time, it being that Harry wouldn't let her half a kilometer near him if she hadn't done those things. But if someone was bleeding next to her, half a foot from death, and she was the only person within a two-country radius that could save them, they would just have to die, because she wasn't going to look up from her book. If someone had just invented a way to make anyone immortal and was kind enough to give her some, they better have also have invented something to instantly make books erupt into flame, because otherwise she wouldn't look up. If someone tried to talk to her, they would literally have to shut her book and throw it halfway across the room.

Not that anyone wanted to talk to her anymore now that she didn't have her brothers. She realized now just how little she socialized outside her family. Her roommates were really the only ones she ever spent any time with besides them, and that was even forced. And they hated her. Well, "secretly." If she hadn't been sucked into her

studies she was sure she would have heard and saw a party going on around her when Lavender and Parvati realized she wasn't answering their squawks and squeals.

Once Hermione had gotten out of the moping phase and really took the time to consider why Harry was doing all that besides to take over her life (it had taken quite a while, mind you), she quickly realized what he was doing. He was simulating exactly what she was doing to Ginny. While a big part of her still doubted it had the same effect, Hermione had stopped worrying about Ginny. She purged her mind of those worrisome thoughts and thought of what was going on around her. The going-ons of Hogwarts brought her to the subject that she had been falling short of her usual overachieving effort in all of her classes. After she took the time to kick herself sufficiently, she pulled herself permanently out of her funk and focused on the pressing matters and swore by her hand and God that if Harry ever told Molly and/or Ginny about those few weeks that she would personally strangle him with said hand.

And now she was back on top. It hadn't taken long, but she knew she had a long way to go before she could be declared back to her old self.

At the beginning she had tried every once in a while to say she understood what he was getting at and that she would do better. But every time, Harry ignored her. It took a while for her to realize that it wasn't about promises and understanding. It was about changing things. And that's exactly what she planned to do. Change things.

For the last...she didn't care to count, but for a long time she had decided that she would be on an incredibly strict schedule: breakfast, classes, study at break, more classes, lunch, more classes, dinner, homework, respond to Ginny's daily letter (in a non-worrying or overprotective matter, a purely sisterly, pen-pal kind of writing), study, sleep. She had not deviated from it once, and was very proud of herself for this fact. Because those first few days, her schedule had still been strict, but in a different way. It mainly consisted of: cry, desperately attempt to get Harry to forgive her, mope and not pay attention in classes, mope at break, pay even less attention in classes and stare at Harry, trying to use her imaginary telepathy

powers to give him a mental signal along the lines of “Forgive Hermione, forgive Hermione,” attempt to see if it worked at lunch, try it again in some more classes, then become dejected when it still doesn’t work, skip dinner, and go to her dormitory to cry and mope more.

In retrospect, she very much preferred the newer schedule, where she knew that it was at least working, and actually increasing her mind power rather than pretending she had the ability to project thoughts into other people’s minds. And if she did, she would have told Harry, who would have known that it was her who was telling him to “Forgive Hermione, forgive Hermione,” and he would have laughed sadistically and ignored her projected request to go to the common room, sit in front of the fire in his favorite squishy arm chair and pet his evil, fluffy, overweight kitten, Mittens the Third.

Okay, maybe her imagination got the best of her when she had a drought in social activity, but she hadn’t felt like such a pariah since she was seven years old. It was strange to feel this way again. To feel hated even though somewhere in the back of her mind she knew that they loved her. At least, this time, she had factual evidence and a million extraordinarily credible reasons to believe that Harry was doing this because he loved her, rather than just knowledge of trends.

Hermione sighed again and turned the page again. Well, again times about a zillion. She had never turned so many pages in her whole life. Her thumb and forefinger had calluses on like never before from the paper, and the side of the third knuckle on her ring finger had an even bigger one from holding her quill so much. In three months she never would have thought even she and Percy together could have read the number of books she had flipped through in the last three months.

But it was all worth it, she kept telling herself. If it got her family back, if it got her life back, it was all worth it.

XoXoX

“How’d you do yesterday?” Luna asked Ginny when they saw each other in the clearing the day after Ginny’s physical therapy session. Ginny smirked triumphantly.

"I walked."

"That's great, you're making progress," Luna congratulated. Another thing to add to the long list of Luna's attributes that qualified under the "just the thing Ginny needed" category: she was always very good at congratulating her on the things that Ginny wanted to be congratulated on. The latter girl had forever complained about thinking that walking should be no big deal for anyone, since it was learned at an early age and maintained through most of one's life. So Luna did not praise her for walking, rather for making the progress, the one thing Ginny wanted more than anything else at that moment.

"Only for a few seconds, though. Then I collapse and can't do anything else," Ginny cringed in her anger, tying a plate of grass in a knot. One of her many habits she had taken on as a way to keep her hands busy, including but not limited to with drumming on things, playing with her hair, and tracing her scar.

"Progress is progress, Ginny; no matter how you look at it."

"I look at it differently than you."

Silence struck between them for a while. Ginny was still tying the grass in knots, but when she tore it in half trying to untie each and every individual knot that she had tied only moments ago, she chucked it behind her and started on another nervous twitch of hers. It was simple and by now, after doing it for so many months, she had gained quite a bit of speed. All she did was tap each of her fingertips, starting with her forefinger, against the tip of her thumb, and then go backwards in the quickest succession she could pull off. It had started when she was trapped with those bloody Grangers, bored out of her mind and trying to think of anything besides the injuries she had. So she did this, for lack of anything better, and it had caught on. Strangely enough, unlike most other things she had started to do during that time, it did not remind her of the pain. It reminded her of being away from the pain, away from the horror.

"This situation," Luna said in her dreamy voice, though quieter than usual. "It's truly shown your Gryffindor courage."



"We won't be in the same House when Hogwarts rolls around, you know that, right?" Ginny said in the same volume. She thought of the whisper effect Hermione had told her about a long, long time ago. If someone suddenly spoke to you in a whisper, you would automatically respond the same way, not knowing any better or worse.

"Yes," Luna said. "I am aware. But that doesn't mean we still won't have classes together. The Ravenclaws and the Gryffindors are paired together for many classes, I have heard."

"And we'll meet other friends, too. It's not like we're the only people who can stand each other, right? We'll both make new friends easily."

Ginny said this, and Luna agreed, but neither of them believed that come September this would be true. With Ginny's accident and Luna's belief in anything she read about or heard about, they would be the talk of school in the way that people would stare and whisper behind their hands. Not the way that they would walk up and introduce themselves and be nice, like they would want.

The both knew that it would be hard to try to make new friends after being just them together for so long. Ginny knew she couldn't rely on her brothers and sister forever, or for even a short period of time. On the train, sure. In the common room and at meals, of course. But once she stepped into the corridors, whether outside the common room, outside the Great Hall or just anywhere around the school, she was a year younger than them. She was the first year, Harry, Ron, and Hermione were the second years, Fred and George were the fourth years, and Percy was the sixth year. She couldn't expect it to be different. And that would be painful. Because after so many years of the age difference being limited to "well that's because you're just a wee bit littler than me. Once you're my age you'll be able to do it too," she was used to just being one of them.

As for Luna, she had spent so long locked up in that house with her father or traveling around the continent looking for exotic creatures that most considered fake, she had been proud of herself for making her first friend since her mother's death in Ginny. And even that

friendship was simply a resurrection of an old one; in fact, the one friendship she had managed to tell people about if they asked her about her friends. She would simply say, "I have a friend back home, but since my father and I started traveling, we've grown apart."

And that was true, in a way.

But as she had realized on these travels, people didn't like her. They thought she was weird or slightly mental. Not that it mattered to her, she knew what she knew and she believed what they believe, and same went for anyone around her. But what did matter to her was that so many people conformed to this same thought. She had meant only a handful of people who were consistently nice to her no matter what creatures she talked about, without even the slightest tone change or strange look. And she doubted it would be any different once she went to Hogwarts. She was prepared for the stares and the criticism. That didn't matter to her. What did those people mean to her? What did those people who scoffed and sneered and snickered mean to her? Nothing. They meant nothing but the exact kind of person she should avoid at all costs.

They talked for a while longer until the sun started to set. Ginny still feared to be anywhere outside after dark, no matter whom she was with, and wanted other people to be safe from the evil hands of kidnappers as well, so she made sure that Luna got home before dark as well.

Molly smiled at Ginny when the girl rolled into the kitchen the evening.

"How's Luna doing?"

"Great. She said to say hi. And that Mr. Lovegood wants to have tea with you and Dad sometime. He thinks that since Luna and I are becoming friends again, that maybe you should follow suit," she said. Then she cocked her head to the side. "Though I don't exactly remember you ever having any kind of relationship with Xenophilius that could vaguely resemble a friendship, my memory could just be a little foggy. Did you three ever do anything besides talk for a few minutes when dropping off or picking up either me or Luna?"

Molly laughed. "I think we might have mingled a bit at parties and pretended to get along very well. One tea couldn't hurt though, could it?"

"Don't feel pressured. He insists on it being with Dad, and I told her to tell him that he's been very, very busy lately and that we don't know when his schedule will clear up."

"Oh, I love that I've raised you to protect your parents from possibly painful experiences," Molly said, kissing her cheek. "But lying is wrong, you know that right?"

"Unless it saves a loved one from a particularly painful experience."

"That's always the exception."

Lying to protect a loved one was an exception from the no lying rule. Ginny was rather fond of that exception.

A/n Okay, I wrote this very quickly for no reason at all. The time skip was simply so that I didn't have to go through the whole thought process of Hermione finding out what Harry was trying to pull off, rather doing it in retrospect, and also so I didn't have to go through the tiny little beginnings of Ginny's physical therapy. Sorry for the shortness of the chapter and of some of the thoughts. Please tell me any complaints you have, and I can almost absolutely assure you next chapter will be at least four thousand words. I'll make it my number-one priority. Oh and I also apologize for the very randomness of Hermione's little bit, but I felt a strange urge to deny myself use of the backspace button for that whole thing and so I wrote the first things that came to my mind.

I'm in Chicago right now on vacation to see some family, so even though it says five-thirty on the clock it only really feels like three-thirty for me. Damn my accent's gonna be strong after this.

Anyway, sorry if there were any strange grammar mistakes or lapses into stream-of-consciousness because I've been reading *On The Road*, and Kerouac writes in a way that is strangely...imitable in a way that you don't want to, but it leaks its way into your mind. So I'll

have to read some of my own work to get back to normal. And I hate reading my own work.

And I apologize for that total stream-of-consciousness, but it's not my fault, you only have Jack Kerouac to blame.

Signing off, and this is Truth.

Disclaimer! Hey, do you own Harry Potter? Yeah, neither do I. Don't it suck?

A/n Okay, so here's my apology/excuse. My computer, old and frail as it is, finally gave out on me, coincidentally, the day I got back from Chicago (Harry's birthday, too I was very sad that I couldn't update). So, as I awaited for the arrival of the laptop I should have gotten months ago, I drove my parents and brother crazy reciting line after line after line of all my stories so I wouldn't forget what I wanted to write. Everywhere I went I kept a notepad—a habit I'm going to continue—and wrote down ideas and dialogue like a madwoman, angry beyond belief that I could read, review, and do everything but update, because my parents' computer is a Mac and therefore incompatible with .docx files. Luckily, I always expect bad luck, so every day I keep track of all the documents I modified then email them to myself. It keeps my inbox full but dammit, it's less expensive than flash drives.

So now, I need to go see if anyone agrees with me that Breaking Dawn consisted of plot devices and deus ex machinas up the yin-yang. Enjoy the chapter.

"It just takes some time, little girl you're in the middle of the ride. Everything, everything will be just fine. Everything, everything will be all right."

--Jimmy Eat World "The Middle"

"Harry, you know we can't do this alone," Ron said. He shook his head.

"We can and we will, Ron. If we don't, Snape is going to get the stone. We can't let him do that," Harry said.

"At least let's recruit Fred and George."

"No, then we'd have to explain everything to them."

"Hermione knows it!"

Harry glared at him. "We can't go into the girls' dormitories, Ron."

“Fine. Be stupid. We’re going to get killed.”

“Another reason not to get Hermione with us. If we get Hermione killed then Ginny will resurrect us from the dead for the sheer purpose of just killing us again.”

“This is ridiculous, Harry, you’ve seen her around school! She always has a book in her face, she doesn’t pay attention to anyone! She’s eating well, Parvati and Lavender are saying she’s sleeping just fine—what’s your problem? You know she’s working hard and this is all you do.”

“I’m doing this because I don’t want Hermione to get hurt. I don’t want her to have a single other bad memory. I want her to be happy, and that’s all I’ve been doing the last four months,” he said, pulling Ron by the arm out of their dormitory. They looked to make sure no one was there; it appeared to be so.

As they walked toward the portrait hole, however, they heard Neville, and, after arguing with him, finally cursed him, threw the Invisibility Cloak over themselves, and ran out the portrait hole toward the third floor.

XoXoX

Ginny pressed her mouth tightly closed as she shot up in bed. She had been having nightmares still, but now she learned to stay lucid enough to not scream and wake up anyone. This had led her mother to believe she no longer had any nightmares, and she was thankful for that. Her hope was that if she managed to control her reactions to the nightmares, that maybe that meant they were going to be over soon. They had gotten worse. They weren’t memories anymore. All of them were about her family, being killed one by one as the others had to watch. Sometimes the killing wasn’t even done by the Grangers. Most of the time she didn’t know who it was.

Something about this made it even more painful to watch than the memories. Maybe it was simply because with memories, she had already gone through them and knew what was going to happen next,

knew when it was going to end, and could at least assure herself that she was dreaming about it because it had already happened and though it seemed very likely, it was not going to happen again. Whereas the new dreams were possibilities. They could still happen, there was still a chance that those things could happen to her family, and she had no idea if or when. Even watching it she had no idea what was going to happen or when it would end.

Or, another possibility all together, she had an incredibly warm heart and her family's pain was her pain, and seeing her family hurt was worse than any physical harm that could be done to her.

She reckoned it was the former.

A reluctant glance at the clock showed her it was three fifteen in the morning. With a groan, she fell back onto the pillows, searching around the room for something she could do while pretending to be asleep for the next five hours. Her eyes settled upon the notebook on her desk, and she quickly stood and walked over to the desk, grabbed the notebook, a quill, and an ink bottle before going back to her bed and lighting candle.

She had never written in a diary before she was kidnapped. Hermione had always kind of been her diary. Unlike her brothers, she had been determined as a young child to learn how to read, write, and do mathematics all by herself, with as little help as possible from her parents. She had basically succeeded. Her parents were related to the learning process, because they read to her the stories that she memorized to learn the sounds according to the strange symbols she saw on the pages, and then did the backwards for writing, learning to put the funny symbols on parchment to make sounds.

Still, it took her longer that way, and by the time she understood the English language as well as her brothers, Hermione was a live-in relative and they became each other's diaries. So she was not familiar with the whole process of 'Dear Diary, here's a summary of what I did today and my thoughts about it on the off chance you give a damn.' But as she started to be plagued by nightmares and irritating habits, she started caring less and less on the subject of whether the

diary cared about her day or not, and just started telling it. Mostly, she started writing her nightmares down.

Later, she thought as she wrote the most recent nightmare down, she had the idea of turning them into stories. They seemed action-y enough for the average reader, and almost even fictional. So, she imagined that whenever it was that this situation started to bother her enough to freely talk about it, she would perhaps write of her ordeal, perhaps incorporate it into a story. She had heard of people taking out their anger into writing. Hermione told her of several authors who approached their problems by turning them into amusement for other people.

Maybe she could do the same. Maybe there was someone out there who would be on the edge of their seat, turning page after page after page, just waiting to find out when the girl got out of the makeshift prison cell. Wondering just how she lived so long.

She wrote all through the night...morning...night-morning. She was never exactly good at finding the right word. Lethologica would be the death of her.

There was, however, one downfall to this plan to write. When she disappeared into writing mode, cancelling out all her other senses besides sight (and even that failed her sometimes), she lost track of time. So when her father walked into the room to check on her before he went to work, a habit Ginny personally found very frustrating, he saw her awake.

"Ginny?" he said. "What are you doing?"

Her head snapped up, and she jumped, causing the ink bottle to fall off the bed, spilling ink on the floor and on her duvet. He pulled out his wand and cleaned it up with one wave, sending the ink bottle over to her desk.

"What's going on?"

"I-I'm writing," she said.



"I can see that," he smiled, sitting on the edge of her bed. She closed the notebook, her quill still stuffed in between the pages, and set it on her nightstand. "How long have you been awake?"

Ginny looked at the clock, even though she could tell it had been a long time, as sunlight was shining in through her window. She didn't feel exactly like telling him she had been up for almost four hours, so she simply told him the time. "Since three fifteen," she said sheepishly.

"Is everything okay? Did you have a nightmare?" he asked. "Why didn't you go back to sleep?"

"I couldn't," she said. "I can't stand to see it again."

"What?" he asked, sounding worried now. "Couldn't stand to see what?"

Ginny, not with enough control over herself to tell the nightmare and not have an emotional breakdown in front of her father, who would most definitely get uncomfortable and not know what to do in that event, reached over and grabbed the book, flipping back several pages to a page covered with carefully written text. Without a word, she gave it to her father.

"Wha—?"

"Read," she said, pointing to the place where he was supposed to read.

He sighed and pushed his glasses up his nose and read the text that she pointed to. It seemed to be that it wasn't all that was on the page, but he didn't spare a millisecond's glance toward it, caring more about the nightmares that were plaguing his daughter every night of the week.

My torturer chained me to the wall and sneered, releasing a rumbling chuckle. He took a knife from his pocket and grazed the flat of the blade across my face, making sure it did not cut but a centimeter of my skin.

Then, with a simple flick of his wrist, the knife was gone from his hand. I watched, horrified, as I realized that it was now in the forehead of the youngest of my seven older brothers. He fell backwards, blood gushing from his head, and collapsed to the ground. The rest of my family rushed toward him, screaming and, in the case of my mother and sister, sobbing. Tears of my own fell as I saw my torturer was moving toward the pack that was my family.

I opened my mouth to scream, but with a quick movement from my torturer, that was pointless as well, for there was something stuffed in my mouth preventing breathing, let alone sound. He flipped backwards through the air, landing on my oldest brother and bringing him to the ground, taking the knife out of my brother's forehead to stab the man under his feet in the back of the neck. As his shoes were painted red, he moved to the left, taking a swipe with the knife through my mother's midsection, nearly cutting her in half at the navel.

My father, in his anger, rushed to the torturer and punched him square in the face. The attacker, now furious, slashed his knife across my father's face, then across the torso, and finally again through the face. As my older twin brothers charged at him from the back, he spun in a circle, his blade slicing cleanly through the skin of their chests. The exact same place, the exact same length, the exact same amount of blood. I cried out against the material shoved in my mouth, and tasted blood in my mouth from the strain.

The rest of my brothers and my sister acted in what I originally believed was smart; they turned and ran. But the attacker was faster and charged at them, crushing the youngest, formerly the second youngest until only seconds ago, into the door. I could hear the snap of his bones from across the room, but he willed himself not to scream. The attacker smirked, holding the blood-covered blade up to my brother's face, tracing it along his face, leaving trails of our family's blood on his skin. As the knife made it farther up his jaw, so did the attacker's face, until finally his mouth was right next to my brother's ear.

"Coward," he said, and then shoved the blade upward into my brother's mouth from the underside of his chin.

And so only three were left. My sister was thrown against the wall with such force I was surprised she did not fall unconscious right there. I closed my eyes, forcing myself not to watch any more. I heard the sobs of my sister and the drops of blood as they hit the floor. I heard the groans of my brothers as they took their final breath, and I wished I could close my ears as well.

My sister's voice rung through my ears, however, telling me something.

"Wake up. Please, wake up."

Arthur sat there, the notebook in his trembling hands, sickened to the very core at the knowledge that his daughter had these images in her head, and clear enough that she could write them down and have it be so painfully fastidious. If he hadn't been so disgusted, he would have congratulated her for the quality of the writing. All the years he had thought of himself as such a good father and he didn't even know his daughter could write that well.

"Ginny...Ginny, baby, you know none of this could happen, right?" he assured her gently, stroking her hair. She chuckled darkly.

"The aerial stunts were a bit over-the-top, my imagination must be mixing in with my nightmares," she mumbled. Arthur put his arms around her and held her close to his chest.

"Seriously, cut in half at the navel?" he said, sounding rather undaunted. "That's very unlikely, sweetie."

"I saw it, Daddy, and it looked too real," she sobbed into him, the tears finally impossible to choke back. He pulled her tighter to his body and swayed gently with her.

"It's okay, Ginny. Nothing is going to happen to us, I can promise that. None of us will get killed or be anywhere close to death for a long, long time. I'm not going to say none of us will get hurt, because speak of the devil and he shall appear at your elbow, but we won't be anywhere near death. There will be nothing to worry about for a long

time, I'm going to assure you of that," he said. She sniffed. "Feel any better?"

"A little," she mumbled, almost incoherently through her sobs. He chuckled.

"No you don't."

They sat like that for a while, until Ginny pulled back, looking at him amusedly. "'Speak of the devil and he shall appear at your elbow'? Really, Dad?" she said sardonically. He rolled his eyes, shrugging.

"Well, what else was I suppose to call it?"

"A kiss of death?" she suggested, still looking like she was trying not to laugh.

"That's morbid."

"And 'speak of the devil and he shall appear at your elbow' isn't?"

He rolled his eyes again, getting up off the bed. "I have to get to work."

Ginny grinned after him. "Love you, Daddy."

"Love you too, Ginny."

XoXoX

As they approached the third floor, Harry suddenly stopped, befuddling Ron for a moment as he realized the other half of the cloak wasn't moving. "Someone's coming."

"We just took care of Filch," Ron whispered back, groaning slightly. He was really not prepared to deal with the caretaker and his precious cat again, nor would he be exactly thrilled to find Peeves staring at them from around the corner.

Harry shook his head. "It's not Filch. If it was him we would see Mrs. Norris first," he said, looking around the area where he heard the footsteps coming from, and realizing it was completely dark except for the sole patch of moonlight from the window. "No, it's not anyone who would get us in trouble."

"How do you know that?"

"If it was a ghost we wouldn't hear anything, if it was a teacher we'd see wand light," Harry said. "It's a student."

"Do you think it's Neville?" Ron asked. Harry shook his head again.

"Gryffindor he may be, but have you ever known Neville to be that brave?"

"Who else could it be?" Ron asked. Harry flipped the cloak off of himself. "Harry, what the bloody hell are you doing!"

"How did you find us?" Harry asked the newcomer. Ron peeked around Harry to see who it was, and then, with a smile on his face, pulled the cloak off. He opened his mouth to say something, but before a sound came out of his mouth, he was cut off.

"That's not important. Now do you need my help or not?" Hermione asked. Harry nodded.

"We do," he said. After a short pause where no one moved or made a single sound, he spoke again. "How long ago did you find out?"

"A long time ago," she said quietly, carefully. "Thank you for doing it. I needed that."

Harry looked down at his shoes; he hated being thanked. "We should go."

"Yes," she said, stepping toward them. "We should."

They all got under the cloak and proceeded in their journey.

XoXoX

"I'm going to kill them," Ginny said. "How could they be so stupid? I'm going to kill them!"

"Now, Ginny, nobody actually got hurt. Harry's just a little weak. Don't overreact."

"They could have gotten killed! And they're telling me to be safe and not do anything drastic! The filthy hypocrites!" Ginny said, ignoring her mother's attempts to calm her down. "Tell me not to talk to strangers and they go off to willingly fight a Death Eater! Beg me to stay safe and not do anything dangerous and they try to fight a man that several fully trained wizards can't even handle without dying."

Molly stared at her daughter. "Are you done now?"

"Wait a second," Ginny said, holding up a finger. She took a deep breath, an angry look on her face, then released the breath, dropped the expression and finger, and put a smile on her face. "Yeah, I'm done."

She rolled her eyes at her daughter. "Ginny, just keep yourself calm. Everyone is alive, with the exception of the Defense Against the Dark Arts teacher and no harm has been done."

"With the exception of they have to find a new Defense Against the Dark Arts teacher," Ginny said. "I know that. Still, it's my job as their little sister to bother them relentlessly for breaking their own rules."

XoXoX

"Pro-Professor? There's one thing I'm still confused on."

"Well, ask away, my dear boy, nothing to fear," Dumbledore said. He had been expecting questions; he couldn't have very well singlehandedly killed Quirrel by melting his face and not have any questions about it.

“Why did Quirrel’s skin do that when I touched him? What was it that was so strong inside me?”

Dumbledore smiled. “It was love, Harry.”

“Love?”

He nodded. “You remember me telling you a long time ago, your first night at the Weasleys’, I believe, that your parents died to save your life, therefore giving you the protection of their love?”

“Yes,” Harry said. He had never forgotten that night. It was plastered in his mind, right next to meeting Molly, meeting Sirius, meeting Remus, the moment Ginny got out of the hospital, and almost choking on the Golden Snitch. “And that you were worried it wouldn’t stay while I was with Molly and the Weasleys, that it might disappear and I would be in danger in the event of Voldemort’s return.”

“I was worried of that,” Dumbledore said. “Although now I am not. The power you used to stop Voldemort from getting the stone was not only your mother’s protection.”

Harry raised his eyebrows in surprise. “Wh-what was it?”

“The correct question would be whose was it.”

Harry tilted his head in confusion. His mother’s love wasn’t the only thing protecting him anymore. What could it—?

“Molly’s love,” Harry said.

Dumbledore shook his head. “Not just Molly, Harry. All the Weasleys.” He sat back in his chair. “Molly took you into her home without any hesitation, even though she had seven other children to care for at the time. They all sacrificed a lot for you. While it may not have been their lives, it was strong enough to give you a protection similar to your mother’s. Albeit, we do not know how strong this protection is, and we also do not know if your mother’s protection is still in effect. Nonetheless,” he gave Harry the tiniest of smiles. “you are a lucky boy, Harry Potter.”

Harry smiled. Then, his eyebrows knitted together in confusion. "So...does Hermione have the same protection?"

He looked pensive for a moment. "We can only know at a time when she could be risking her life. However, since I doubt with you and your brothers' protectiveness of their sisters, that she will ever be allowed close to a situation of that sort, but if your grasp of her ever slips, I am almost sure she will still be protected."

Harry grinned.

"Well, I do believe my time has been well filled, and now, I must be going," he said, standing. "I wish you well in your recovery, Harry."

As he headed toward the door, Harry suddenly cried out, "Professor Dumbledore!"

He turned around, his robes billowing behind him. "Yes, Harry?"

"That day, when you took me away from the Dursleys...why did you call Molly? I mean, she barely knew my parents, she barely knew their friends. She wouldn't be any kind of expert on who might be able to take me in. Why did you call her?"

Dumbledore smiled. "Very good question, Harry. You see, I am very good friends with the Weasleys. I always have been. I have known Molly for a very long time. I taught her when she was your age. She has a very wide, open heart. She welcomes many things into it, many people. Often without even talking to the person for very long, she will become attached."

Harry stared at him, amazed. "You tricked her! You knew that if she saw me, that I would have a home, that she would take me in!"

The headmaster put his finger up to his smiling lips. "Let's keep this between us, shall we, Harry?"

As he turned and walked out the door, he heard Harry call out to him, "Thank you, sir!"



XoXoX

Because of Harry, Ron, Hermione, and by pure and total surprise Neville, Gryffindor had won the House Cup against Slytherin by a mere ten points. As the twins—and, as if it were the day for more surprises than sunlight, Percy—continually basked in the glory that their younger siblings played such a large part in beating Slytherin, Hermione kept herself small, Ron welcomed the attention, and Harry, still thoughtful from his talk that afternoon with Dumbledore, stayed silent and mulled it over as he ate the wonderful Hogwarts food.

These people saved his life. Not only had they stopped the Dursleys from murdering him, but they stopped Voldemort from doing the same. Not only a few days in the past, but as well in the future, they might save his life, purely because they let him in their house. Because they let him in their bedroom. Because they let him in their kitchen. Because they let him at their table. Because they let him in their Quidditch team. Because they let him on their brooms.

Because they let him in their lives.

Because they let him on their clock.

He wondered if they knew of this protection. He wondered if Molly knew just how much she had saved his life, and how much she would probably save his life in the future. He wondered if the twins knew that if one of their pranks went awry, that he would be safe, because of those few months when they didn't dare upset him, where they didn't dare prank him, where they taught him how to ride a broom and told him that he could make the House team. He wondered if Ginny knew not to worry about him and Hermione, because her love—her smiling face welcoming them to the Burrow and teaching them how to use forks and telling them the difference between houses and homes—was the reason that they would be safe for a long, long time. He wondered if Arthur knew that because he had been patient enough to wait until they learned he was not an easily angered man, and even when he was angered, he didn't even yell, let alone hit, patient enough to ask them if it was okay if he hugged them, that his

adopted and foster children would be safe from people who didn't understand what he sacrificed for them.

Every part of his mind doubted it.

And, selfishly, he wanted them to worry. He wanted them to worry, he wanted them to be scared for him, he wanted them to be terrified that he might not come home safe, if only because it kept him remembering, forever and ever, that they loved him. That they sacrificed a lot for him, but they were ready to sacrifice anything more, maybe even their lives, if it meant he could only come out of one more battle alive.

Because he wasn't dumb enough to think that Voldemort was gone now. He wasn't dumb enough to believe that he was ever gone.

But that wasn't the only thing that wasn't gone. Hope. That wasn't gone. That was still alive and kicking. And it would never die. Because of his mother, because of the Weasleys, because of the love they showed, Harry would live through those battles. He would live as long as Voldemort was confused by love.

So let them worry. Let them be scared, let them be terrified. As long as it meant he would be safe eventually, let them stay ignorant of that fact.

And it was with that thought in his mind that he managed to fall asleep peacefully that night, without even a single nightmare about the man with two faces.

XoXoX

When they got off the train, it was barely a second before Hermione rushed to Ginny and Harry rushed to Molly. After a few moments of silent hugging, Hermione grinned at Ginny.

"So, give it to me straight, Gin," she asked. "How much trouble am I in?"

Ginny smiled, tightening her grip around Hermione. "Awww....you're in giant trouble you filthy little hypocrite."

"I figured I would be. Let's at least get home first?"

Ginny nodded in agreement, sitting back in her wheelchair and smirking widely.

XoXoX

"Are you okay, Harry?" Molly asked. Usually Harry wasn't one for spontaneous hugging, and if he was, it was usually when either he or Molly was upset. Still, it would only be for a very short time. She was starting to get worried, especially while thinking of the things he could have seen this year.

But, when he looked up at her, he was smiling like Ginny in the Sir and Ma'am Chronicles. He nodded. "I'm great, Molly. I just—I missed you. I haven't seen you in a really long time. I missed you, I missed hugging you."

Molly smiled. "I missed you, too, Harry. I love you."

He hugged her tighter at these words. "Thank you, Molly. For everything."

"It has always been my pleasure, Harry," she told him. "Now I believe Sirius and Remus are out buying you and Ron a Quidditch Supply Store and Hermione a bookstore, but they'll be back by dinner."

"She's been preparing for this meal all day," Ginny said. "I woke up to the smell of freshly chopped onions." She smiled. "And she let me lick the spoon to the Treacle Tart," she said, winking at Harry, who grinned at this information.

A/n Four thousand, four hundred and forty-four words not including author's notes. I made sure of this number, because this chapter is all so obsessed with love and mothers that I figured I might as well put a lot of fours in the number count, being that is my mother's favorite

number, mostly because that's how many people are in my family. So, there you go. Try to be a good daughter for the best mom there is.

And, as of today, I have been on this site for one whole year! Yay!

The whole time I wrote this I felt like I was writing the season finale to a television show. I don't know why, because there's going to be another chapter in just a few days, but that's what it felt like.

As for the whole Dumbledore confessing that he tricked Molly, I reread this story on my parents' computer when I found out I couldn't write it, and that was the most annoying thing to me. I guess I was so fixated on making it seem logical that I didn't even consider...making it logical. Seriously, it annoyed me beyond belief and I'm surprised none of you told me. So there it is. Dumbledore tricked Molly into taking Harry into her home so that he would have a home and be surrounded by people who would love, support, and protect him.

So here's how it goes. This story has been up for nine days shy of eight months. In that time, it has accumulated over one hundred thousand words (making it my...wordiest story yet), over eighty thousand hits (making it my most visited story), over three hundred alerts (making it my most read story), over four hundred reviews (making it my most reviewed story), over one hundred-fifty favorites (making it my most...favorited story), and belongs to over twenty communities (making it my most...social story?).

Wow! That's...big. Bigger than well...this author's note, for example. Yes. It is bigger than that. And that is very big, because my current goal with this author's note is to kick the little word count thing in the bottom left corner of Microsoft Word to read over five thousand, and currently it's very, very close, so I'm just going to keep typing. You should probably stop reading, because this will be a giant waste of your time, but then again you're read this far so you probably—oh, there it goes! Okay, goal accomplished.

**IMPORTANT!!** If you care about the pairings put in this story, I have a poll up on my profile where you can vote on the pairings. So, if that is of any importance to you, vote.

Insanely long, almost over five hundred words author's note is now over.

Ja, mata!

Disclaimer! If you're happy and you know it clap your hands! (claps) If you own Harry Potter and you know it laugh maliciously! (Somewhere in a distant land, J.K. Rowling laughs to herself) If you didn't laugh maliciously, but you really, really want to, if you don't own Harry Potter cry 'Boohoo!' (runs away sobbing.)

A/n Most of this chapter takes place in bedrooms, and there is probably a ninety-seven percent chance you will point to a word and find it inside quotation mark.

"Are you calling me irrational? Because I'll tear your head off...I'll tear it off and I'll throw it over that fence."

--Kim Kelly, "Freaks and Geeks"

"Ginny, the feast is ready! Bring your extra stomachs!" Bill called.

"Get everyone around the stairs!" she called back. He raised an eyebrow.

"Why?"

"Just do it! C'mon, I got something to show everyone!"

"Okay," Bill said. He got everyone from the kitchen, and everyone was complaining under their breath and wondering loudly what was going on. "Okay, we're all here."

"What's this about?" Ron asked.

"I want to show you something!" she said. "Everyone's there?"

"Yes, Ginny; just show us already."

Ginny, beaming widely, came down the stairs. It took everyone a moment—luckily no more but unfortunately no less—before they realized what the giant surprise was.

"You can walk!" Hermione said. "Oh my God, Ginny, you can walk!"

"Why didn't you tell me?" Molly asked.

"I wanted to surprise everyone, I didn't just want to tell you out of the blue, oh hey, yeah, I can walk now," she said, smiling.

"How's your endurance?" Percy asked, sounding official.

"Capio and I timed it to roughly eleven and a half minutes at my best, and even then I have to afterwards rest for upwards of half an hour, so you'd better get me in the kitchen before I collapse."

"How long have you been able to walk like this?" Hermione asked.

"About two weeks, maybe three. All I know is that once I get up to twenty minutes straight, Capio says that it will be way easier to build up endurance, and she says by January I'll be able to walk for four hours straight without having to worry about getting tired."

"That's amazing, Ginny! I'm so proud of you!" Molly said.

"Well, Tonks was just asking how your physical therapy was going, I guess I can give her a good answer now," Sirius winked. Ginny grinned and nodded.

"Yep," she said, sitting down at the table. She had to repress a moan of relief, as stairs was still something she had not completely mastered yet. "I do believe this is quite a good answer."

They all began to eat, and the topic of Ginny's progress was high on the list of talking points for the evening.

: Begin Flashback!! Everyone cheer, because I know how much you love these:

"So I'm going to show my family when Harry, Ron, Hermione, Percy and the twins get back from Hogwarts. I'm going to make a big entrance," Ginny told Capio.

"I thought this wasn't something you wanted celebrated. All this time I was under the impression you wanted it to be no big deal. Had I known I would have gotten you a cake. Perhaps some streamers.

Maybe some fireworks. Now I'm depressed. I always look forward to lighting off fireworks, dancing with streamers, and eating cake with my patients. Merlin knows you need the food in you. Maybe if you were a normal weight you could learn to walk so much quicker that by the time I actually get the cake, streamers, and fireworks it will be absolutely pointless because you could just walk out the door and back over to the fireplace to Floo the hell out of here while at the same time talking to that secretary to cancel all your appointments with me from then on and changing your name, address, and growing a moustache, or at least learning a charm to give you a moustache."

"As much as I would love to give you the chance to feed me, if only so you would believe that I actually am eating without my presenting you a signed note from my mother, I unfortunately must inform you that as annoying as this is for me that's just how important this is to my family, especially Hermione and my mother, and if they were all to know that I was making such good progress, well then maybe they would get off my back and stop worrying about me, because I know that no matter what she tells me, no matter what Harry tells me, no matter what Ron tells me, no matter what anyone tells me I am completely sure that Hermione worried herself over me all term and probably made herself sick one way or the other so I'm going to do this and let Hermione know once and for all that I am doing great," Ginny told her, folding her hands in her lap and looking her straight in the eye and barely moving anything but her jaw and tongue through the whole speech.

"That was all one sentence, wasn't it?" Capiro analyzed. Under the scrutinizing glare of Ginny, she chose a different question. "What are you going to do when you have another nightmare when she's sleeping in the bed next to you? It won't be as easy to hide from her as it is to hide from your mother."

Ginny had truly taken advantage of whatever Healer-patient confidentiality existed between herself and her physical therapist. She didn't even know if physical therapist took Hippocratic oaths, but either way, she could tell Capiro anything and know it wouldn't leave her mouth to anyone else but her. One way or the other, she found herself talking to Capiro about everything: the nightmares, the fears, the quirks and nervous ticks—things she couldn't tell her family but



needed a more detailed, in-touch response than the ones Luna Lovegood could provide.

“She knows about nightmares. I know about nightmares, I knew about them before all this happened. Hermione had nightmares about the Grangers for almost a year. Sometimes she’ll still have them, one night in every few. I did and I’ll do the same thing she’s done every night we’ve been together since all of this. I will sit by her side and remind her that’s it’s all over, I will tell her that nothing is going to happen to her and that she is safe and loved. From the day after her custody trial to my seventh birthday I slept in the same bed with her because she was so frightened. It’s lucky that during those times I seemed to run miraculously on four to five hours of sleep a night.”

Capio stared at Ginny. “You’re an amazing kid, you know that?”

“Amazingly strange.”

“I hope you make your family proud when you show them.”

“That was my incentive.”

“I for one know you’ve made me insanely proud.”

Ginny smirked, leaning back in her chair. “That was my incentive.”

: End Flashback. See, that wasn’t too bad:

XoXoX

After dinner, Hermione did not speak again to Ginny about physical therapy. She knew that it was not something Ginny liked to be on center stage. While she could not exactly empathize, she did understand this, and did not press her for any information as they prepared for sleep.

“I missed you, Ginny,” Hermione said. “How’s Luna been doing? We haven’t seen her since her mother died, right? Does she still believe in anything that’s thought to possibly move?”

Ginny laughed. "And some that don't. She's really great, though. She's helped me a lot."

"Really?" Hermione said, surprise apparent in her voice.

"Yeah, really," Ginny chuckled. "She's very helpful. Just someone to talk to, you know? Someone to talk to who won't get overly protective, like Mum."

"Has she been bad?" Hermione asked. She remembered from when she was recovering from the Grangers just how protective her adoptive mother could be. It did help her, because Molly gave her what she wanted and needed, but she supposed that if you wanted your life to continue as normal, Molly would become extremely annoying. And Ginny already had problems being patient with her mother.

"I have to give her a lot of credit. She's letting me take it in strides, not pushing me to do or not do things. And she hasn't pressed me for information about my physical therapy. She really keeps at arm's length most of the time. I just figured...you know, if I told her a lot, she might not be able to keep up the good work. So I'm trying to keep it to what she needs to know."

Hermione nodded, then immediately switched to shaking her head. "Has she seen through it yet?"

"Like I'm a ghost," Ginny chuckled, collapsing on the bed and taking long, deep breaths. "I had no idea it would wear me out so much."

Hermione walked over to her sister's bed, a look of concern on her face. "Did you lie about your endurance? You look exhausted."

"No, no," Ginny said. "I was just practicing all day so I didn't tumble down the bloody stairs. Plus, stairs are harder than flat ground. Have you ever ran like seven miles then climbed up that staircase?"

"I can't say that I have, but it sounds very horrible. I'm sorry."

Ginny laughed. "I'm great, actually. Just a little tired."

“Have you been sleeping okay?” Hermione asked warily, stroking her sister’s hair. Ginny smiled and sat up.

“I’ve been sleeping fine.”

“No nightmares?”

Ginny sighed, seeing no reason to completely and totally lie, being that Hermione would know the answer soon enough to point out her lie and be angry at her for it. So, she answered Hermione’s question with no hesitation. “Not every night.”

Notice, she did say she saw no reason to ‘completely’ and ‘totally’ lie. This combined with the exception to the no lying rule that she and her mother had worked out, she was sure that one little, tiny lie was not too bad. And besides, it wasn’t even that much of a lie. She didn’t have nightmares every night—when she took a Dreamless Sleeping Draught, she did not have a single nightmare. It was just that she left out that little piece of information...a lie of omission. Perfect.

Hermione stared at her. “Just the nights you don’t take your potion, right?”

Damn. “Yeah,” Ginny said, remaining calm.

“And that would be...what? Twenty-nine days out of the month?” Hermione said, standing up, gritting her teeth. Ginny sighed.

“Hermione, that’s better than it sounds. You’re not factoring in the months when there are thirty-one days and I take the potion two days. That really adds up, you know.”

“Yes, but there was also February, which seemed to only have twenty-eight days.”

“That did not at all affect the schedule for the rest of the year. Every month, I take the potion on the thirtieth, then, if applicable, on the thirty-first. The rest of the time, I—”

“Writhe and scream in bed, torturing yourself with memories of an unspeakably torturous time? Beautiful. It sounds just lovely! I can understand the appeal. Would you care to tell me where I can get the—what, Ginny?”

Her sister had shut her eyes and started shaking her head after the first sentence of the apparent rant. Hermione fell onto her own bed and spread her arms.

“What?”

“It’s not—they’re not memories, Hermione, not anymore. None of it—not memories,” she whispered, so light that Hermione barely heard her. But, once she did fully understand, the latter jumped up and made her way over to her sister’s bed once more.

“If they’re not memories...” she began, but did not bother to finish. Ginny looked so miserable that it could only be one thing.

“Complete strangers. Hurting you, killing you, killing all of you. It’s more horrible than anything the Grangers could have done to me. It’s sick, Hermione...and they’re getting worse.”

“Well then take the potion, Ginny, it can’t hurt you.”

“No, Hermione, I need to face this. I need to be brave. They aren’t going to last for the rest of my life. I’ll deal with them. I’m not going to hide from them.”

Hermione shook her head. “You do know how stupid you are, right?”

Ginny grinned. “Well, well, isn’t someone self-consciously projecting?”

With a sigh, Hermione tucked Ginny under the covers. “I’ll stay with you tonight.”

“No. No, no, no, absolutely not. You will stay in your own bed, you will sleep in your own bed, you will pretend I am not here,” Ginny said. “I can see how tired you are. The last few weeks has been exhausting

for you. Please, Hermione, sleep. Don't worry about me, I'll try not to scream."

Hermione buried her face in her hands and grunted loudly. When she lifted her head, she stared at Ginny bewilderedly. "Why must you always worry about everyone else and how they feel before you even give yourself five seconds' thought?"

She blinked. "I'm sorry. Does that bother you?"

XoXoX

Molly was clearly elated after dinner, Arthur noted as she walked into the bedroom beaming. She hadn't smiled like that since the first time Harry and Hermione got in trouble and didn't wait to be hit. He put his arm around her and kissed her cheek.

"Happy, much?" he laughed.

"She can walk, Arthur. All this time I was so worried about her and she can walk."

"You aren't mad that she didn't tell you before?" he grinned. She shook her head.

"I thought I would be, but no. I'm not angry, I don't think I can ever be angry again! This is great, Arthur. She's progressing so quickly. Within no time she'll get her life back, and all this will be in the past. Do you know what that will mean, Arthur?"

He sat up and cupped his hand around her cheeks. "That you can finally get your life back?"

She furrowed her eyebrows, confused. "What are you talking about?"

"I'm talking about how you have barely slept the last few months because you're worried Ginny might not sleep well. I'm talking about how you've been mumbling about her in your sleep and crying. I'm talking about how you don't want her to go away to Hogwarts this year because you're terrified to be away from her. It's getting

ridiculous, Molly, and frankly I don't want to see you like this anymore. I don't want to see you in pain over this anymore."

"I won't be better until she's better."

Arthur sighed. "Molly, you know for a fact this is not something she'll ever just get over. This is going to stay with her for the rest of her life, this is something she's going to have to carry with her until the end. Harry and Hermione will never get over what happened to them. A part of Hermione still to this day wants to stay silent around us, and a part of Harry still wants to call us 'sir' and 'ma'am.' Hermione will never get over that she was told every day she wasn't loved, and Harry will never get over that he had to sleep in a cupboard. Ginny will never get over that she was kidnapped and beaten and tortured."

"And I'll never get over that she was kidnapped and beaten and tortured."

"But you have to bury it. You have to repress the urge to overprotect and keep her in your sight at all times, just like Harry represses the urge to call you 'ma'am,' just like Hermione represses the urge to stay silent. I understand how bad this is for you. Harry and Hermione meant nearly nothing to you before you found out they got hurt, you barely knew Harry past his name and you had never heard of Hermione Granger. But Ginny was your daughter the whole time. You knew her since conception. And the thought of losing her killed you. I know it did, because I almost flung myself off the roof of that hospital, and probably would have if I were widowed and she was my only child."

"Cheery."

"My point is that you need to calm down. Please. This is getting out of hand."

"I'm perfectly calm."

"Then why have you been waking up in the middle of the night, hopping straight out of bed, and going to check if she's still in her room and breathing."

Molly huffed. "I do that with all my children, Arthur."

"Yes. On your way back from Ginny's room."

Molly turned over, folding her arms over her chest. "You sure know how to ruin a moment."

XoXoX

"So, how many pranks do you estimate we can pull before Mum actually gets angry with us?" Fred asked his brother as they climbed into their beds.

"I'm going to reckon that as long as Ginny is around and laughing with us, we'll be able to get in a fair number before she blows," George replied. "If I had to give a ballpark figure, I'd said roughly eight to nine small ones, three to four big ones, and five to seven if we mix and match."

"I like those odds."

"Mind you, those are only the odds if we play our cards right and get Ginny laughing. Otherwise, we'll have one or two big ones, five to six small ones, and four or five if we mix and match."

"Did you factor Ginny's progress into these?"

"Yes," George said. He was the mathematician of the duo, but Fred often threw in suggestions. "The fact that she is walking will not only increase Mum's happiness, but also the whole house, making it more likely that Ginny will laugh at our pranks, putting our chances up higher."

"Maybe if we're really good we can even get Mum to laugh."

Upon saying this, Fred sat up in bed, a grin on his face. "Shall that be our goal?"

“Our goal that shall be,” George grinned, then yawned. “G’night, Forge.”

“Dream of Filch’s angry face, Gred.”

“If only.”

XoXoX

“How long has it been since we shared a bedroom?” Charlie laughed. Percy smiled slightly.

“It has been rather long, hasn’t it?” he asked, taking off his glasses and carefully folding them before placing them on the nightstand, his face morphing back into complete seriousness.

“Long enough that we can’t remember.”

“I think it might have been before Bill left. Harry didn’t want his own room and Hermione didn’t want to leave Ginny—”

“Imagine that,” Charlie snorted.

The slight smile returned to Percy’s face. “So you took the room. You were going to be leaving yourself very soon, we all knew it. That Quidditch talent of yours was not to be stopped for a long time. We all believed we would only see you in between seasons.”

Charlie sighed. “Instead you only see me when our sister gets kidnapped.”

“And Christmas,” Percy added in, as if that combination was one to be celebrated, and those two little words were supposed to make Charlie feel less guilty.

“Sometimes,” the older brother sighed again. “I feel so guilty. You’re all growing up so well and I’m missing it. Just thinking of it makes me feel horrible. All the improvements Harry must have made in Quidditch. All the books Hermione has read.” He shook his head.



“Think of all the phases I must have missed seeing Ginny go through.”

“She didn’t change much. Rebellion was the basic direction she was going for all while you were gone. It was never quiet around here. Not all summer, from what I hear not during the school year, not even on holidays. The only times it was quiet was when she was out of the house—which happened more and more often as the time went by, but Mother would still mumble about her absence under her breath—and when Hermione was in the same room as them. Ginny would never yell with Hermione around, and it baffled all of us how committed she was to it.”

“Sounds like a party.”

“Oh, it was. At dinner, Ginny wouldn’t eat much if at all.”

“Mum doesn’t like that.”

“Not at all. So once she started scolding her, Ginny just sat there and wouldn’t yell back until Hermione was done eating and upstairs. It really was miraculous. Sometimes you could see her shaking with anger and yet not a word would slip out.”

“If you asked me which of my brothers and sisters would rebel from our parents, I would not have responded with Ginny. Maybe the twins, or Harry, but not Ginny,” Charlie laughed. Percy’s small smile returned.

“Sometimes she was even worse than the twins. She would always have done something worthy of punishment.”

“Like what?”

“No one besides her is really quite sure. Some of the times Mother didn’t even know when she punished her.”

“Only Ginny could ever get punished for something Mum didn’t know about. Only Ginny could do something Mum didn’t know about,” Charlie laughed.

Percy was quiet. "I don't think she could pull that off anymore."

XoXoX

"Ginny? Ginny, please wake up!"

She shot up in bed. The blankets had the hot, uncomfortable feeling of afternoon, her head felt hot, and her skin was sticky with perspiration. The light poured into the room, tinted indigo from the curtains.

"What time is it?" she asked, falling back in bed, pushing the blankets off her, and taking a deep breath.

"One," she said. Ginny looked up, mesmerized, to find her mother kneeling next to her bed and not Hermione. "Your sister wanted you to sleep. She said you had a bad night last night."

Ginny noticed her wary tone and shrugged. "Insomnia. I was only just falling asleep when Hermione woke up."

She said this trusting Hermione woke up at five or six, like usual. This seemed to be the case, because Molly did not look suspicious.

"Hermione said it was nightmares."

Oh, Ginny was going to get her for saying that. "Did she now?"

"Yes, she did," Molly said. She did not want to elaborate, knowing Hermione was already waist-deep in the whirlpool of trouble that was called Ginny Weasley, but Hermione had said a lot more than that. Molly was now up-to-date that Ginny had been having nightmares this whole time, just keeping quiet. She knew that now the nightmares were different, and she knew that something had to be done.

"Where are they?"

"Your father is at work, and everyone else is playing Quidditch. Well, Hermione is probably reading and Percy is probably doing his

summer assignments, but none of them are in the house, and none of them heard you screaming.”

“I was screaming?”

“Like a banshee,” Molly assured her.

“Sorry,” Ginny mumbled.

There was a long pause in conversation before Molly spoke again. “I really wish you would get help, Ginny.”

“Like what, Mum? Help like what?” she snapped. “I have a big family I can talk to, and Luna and Capio if I don’t want to upset you. What else, Mum, what other help do you insist on getting me?”

“A professional. Someone who can actually assist,” —She expertly avoided the word ‘help’— “you in overcoming all these things.”

“Harry and Hermione both got through this without a shrink, Mum. So can I.”

“Their cases were different than yours, Ginny. They didn’t know any better than to think it was all a dream, that there was such thing as a house like this. But you went into a situation that you knew of in detail yet had never experienced, knowing that it was supposed to be a different world.”

“If you’re trying to say this has skewed the way I see the world you’re wrong,” Ginny said. “My childhood was never normal when it came to naivety. Since I was six years old I knew there was evil in the world, I knew that some people were screwed up. But I dealt with it, because I knew that even those who suffer at the hands of evil will at some point get their chance at good.”

“You knew?” Molly said, emphasizing the last word in case she had misinterpreted.

Ginny snorted. “Yeah. I knew. Now I know it’s not true. Now I know that life is unfair and unbalanced and people die at the hands of evil

without ever knowing the good in the world, without ever getting a chance to meet a nice person or see a kind deed, thinking that the world is a cruel, cruel place and that maybe they really were already dead, and they were in hell. Thinking that it would never end. And yet it does, the only bone the world ever threw them, and they're dead before they can chew it properly."

Molly did not respond.

She chuckled bitterly. "You probably didn't want me to find that out for a long time, did you?"

"You were never a normal kid," was all Molly said in reply.

"What does that mean?"

"It means you're already smarter than your brothers. It means that I'm terrified you are. It means I kind of wish you were stupid."

Ginny chuckled once. "It means you want me to see a psychologist now for more reasons than you ever did."

Molly nodded, and Ginny sighed.

"Will it make you happy if I agree to go to one session?" she asked, biting her lip. Molly's eyes lit up.

"It would make me elated."

"It's expensive," Ginny said. Molly smiled.

"We can pay."

"I really hate you, you know," Ginny told her, but the smile on her face said otherwise.

"You're making your mother very, very happy, don't ruin the moment."

And so ensued the possibly most annoying person Ginny had ever met in the first eleven years of her life.

A/n Hi! Long time no see, eh? I loved this chapter but I don't know why, especially because I was a bit unsure of the Molly/Arthur scene. So please, tell me if that was good or not. And the last two lines of the Hermione/Ginny scene was just something I had to put in. Because a lot of my friends ask me the same question Hermione asked Ginny, and the first time anyone asked me that (it was my mom, oddly enough), I responded, unconsciously, just like that. And my mom was so amazed about me saying that, that now it is my joking response to anyone who asks me that question, just to see their reaction.

On another and completely different note, today's my thirteenth birthday! Yeah, I had to lie to get onto the website. I was born August 13, 1995, but I did skip a grade. My parents say I could pass for thirty if you don't see my face. I doubt this, though, because they won't let go the morning when I was ten and they found me asleep in my chair, listening to a playlist of Pat Benatar, The Cure, Motion City Soundtrack and Jimmy Eat World on my iPod, my thumb pressed between the pages of a copy of *Candide*. They claim that they couldn't find out just what age I could possibly be.

And, aggravatingly enough, I have to go start high school tomorrow :-  
(

Well, enjoy whatever you can, and I'll go pretend school doesn't exist. Sorry for the somewhat cliffhanger.

Ja, mata!

Disclaimer! A pig, a trout, a vegetarian clown, and J.K. Rowling walk into a bar. But I'm not old enough to legally consume alcohol, so I'm obviously none of those four.

A/n This chapter is mostly dialogue as well, because it's not so much characters explaining things to themselves, rather characters explaining things to other people.

"Be careful when you fight monsters, lest you become one."  
--Friedrich Nietzsche

"Hello. Are you Ginny Weasley?" the woman asked, eyeing the wheelchair.

Ginny raised an eyebrow at the woman. She spoke in an "inside" voice, like the librarian threatened to kick her out of the library if she spoke any louder, but also mixed in with a cooing exaggeration to her words, giving the appearance that she was talking to a three-year-old with very sensitive ears.

"Yeah, I am," she said warily.

"Great, you're my next patient!" Impish Library-Goer said, waving for Ginny to follow her into the office. Before entering, Ginny turned to her mother, an imploring look on her face, only to find her mother holding back laughter.

Impish Library-Goer sat down in a chair, gesturing for Ginny to move over across from her. She had her ankles crossed, her skirt perfectly wrinkle-free and taut, and her suit jacket the same. Her dark brown hair was pulled up in what looked like a painful French twist, her eyes covered by square glasses that were much too large for her face. But what annoyed Ginny more than anything of it, she was smiling at her. Like they were going to a Quidditch game.

"Hi, Ginny. I'm Dr. Creek," she said in the same quiet, cooing voice, but like it was the most exciting thing in the whole world and nothing at that moment could ruin her excitement, even hearing about the lives of her patients.

“Hello,” Ginny mumbled. Dr. Freak looked at her, a knowing smile on her face.

“Do you want some chocolate? I have some chocolate in my bag.”

“Oh, no, that’s okay, you don’t have to, I really don’t—”

“I’ll go get you some!”

Ginny stared after Impish Library-Goer as she walked over to her briefcase and picked out a bag of chocolates. This was turning out strange. She thought the whole point of going to a therapist was to have them listen to you and respond accordingly. Already Dr. Freak had forced chocolate on her when she had made it quite evident that she didn’t want any damn chocolate.

After Ginny had taken a chocolate and, under her scrutinizing—yet still smiling—stare, ate it, they got down to business.

“Okay, Ginny,” Dr. Freak said seriously, yet somehow still smiling and cooing. “Tell me your situation.”

Ginny sighed. “Well, in October, I was kidnapped and kept by these...by a married couple, because their biological daughter, Hermione, was taken from their home four years ago and brought to ours.”

“Why did that happen?”

“She was getting horrible abused. We brought her into our home and cared for her, but once her biological...parents...got out of prison, they set out to get her back. Hermione was away at the time, going to school in Scotland. So, instead...they settled for taking me, leaving a note that said, ‘You take our daughter, we take yours.’”

“How long was it before you were found?”

“Seven weeks. Seven weeks of beatings, torture, starvation and sleepless nights. The place I was being kept was only found because blood was leaking through to the flat below. I was locked in a dark,

windowless room with only a clock to keep me sane. And even after a while they threw me into it and broke it.”

“I’m very sorry to hear that,” Dr. Creep said, with only a small trace of a smile on her face. Ginny had to wonder if she had been that annoying in the Sir and Ma’am Chronicles. “So I assume this has been very traumatic for you?”

No, of course not! I just happened to be in the neighborhood, thought we might catch up. How’s the husband and kids? Little Jimmy still running with scissors?

“Yes,” Ginny said, gripping the handles of her wheelchair.

“Anything specific?”

“Blood affects me strongly. I can’t breathe right when I’m around it. I can’t think right. The smell of it, the color of it, the texture of it...I hate it all. And there’s more. Nightmares. Of people hurting my family. Originally it was those who hurt me, but now it’s complete strangers. Sometimes I don’t even see a face. But I can’t sleep because of them, and I wake up screaming and sweating and trying not to upset my mother and sister.”

“Your sister probably is very upset to know that you were exposed to that because her parents wanted her.”

“They aren’t her parents,” Ginny snapped. “They are not her parents, they never were. They gave birth to her, and technicality states that for that reason they are her parents, but they aren’t. The whole time I was there they said that they didn’t believe in love, that they thought love was useless. How can anyone call you a parent when you don’t love?”

Dr. Freak was still smiling. “Tell me about these nightmares. Do you have them every night?”

“Yes.”



“Do they affect your behavior in everyday life? For example, do the images flash before your eyes when certain words are said or when you see certain things?”

Ginny nodded. “Again, blood triggers the images.”

Smiling still, Impish Library-Goer scratched something on her clipboard. “How does your family respond when you tell them something about what is happening to you as a result of your abduction?”

Abduction. Ginny kind of liked that word. It made it sound like aliens were involved, or some beings that weren’t human and probably meant harm to her and many others. Perfect to describe the Grangers. That was the first thing Dr. Creep has said that she liked. Keep up the good work, doc.

“Horribly. I try not to tell them much. Especially my mother and my sister. The first week I was back from the hospital, my mother sat outside my bedroom door at night and Hermione, my sister, she sat next to me and helped me through the night. Of course, neither of them know that I am aware of them doing so, but they were very protective of me.”

“What did the doctors say of your condition?”

“I was in a coma for a week, having nutrients put into my bloodstream. Nearly all my bones were broken, I had knife wounds, trauma from the torture, and injury to my spinal cord. And that’s just a basic summary without getting to the bruises, blood loss, dehydration—I was almost dead. Every H—doctor in the world would have been amazed that I wasn’t.”

“Were you amazed?” Dr. Freak asked, grinning like the idiot she was, slightly open-mouthed.

Ginny nodded. She felt that not only the question but the expression on Dr. Freak’s face was in need of mocking, and once she had an idea, she couldn’t resist. “My family was too. They were too happy to think about it, though. They were sure I was dead. Hermione did a

dance when I woke up. It was strange. There were sparklers involved. My mother threw confetti. The youngest of my older brothers recited poetry. All of it was rather intricate. A live band played. There was a clown and a face painter. He made me a frog."

Dr. Creep looked confused. "Was that a joke?"

"No, I really was a frog. They let us throw a party in the intensive care ward. The doctors blew up balloons. It was a great thing to wake up to."

But the Impish Library-Goer now knew it was a joke. "Do you use humor to try to avoid your real feelings?" she cooed, like she was asking a three-year-old where all the cookies went.

Ginny stared at her. "How much longer do we have to talk about this?"

She looked at her watch. "We've been talking for twenty minutes. So about thirty-five more minutes."

Ginny closed her eyes and rubbed her forehead.

"You're the one who wanted to do this."

"No," Ginny mumbled. "I wasn't. My mum has been insisting I do this for so long. A few nights ago she woke me up from a nightmare and asked me to get help to overcome them."

"You didn't think you needed help?"

"No. Hermione got over it just fine without therapy. But then Mum started talking about how Hermione didn't know anything different than evil and I ended up telling her too much about some things and...she just looked so hurt that I was going through it alone. So I agreed to come to one session if it would make her happy."

Still smiling, Dr. Freak asked, "Was she happy?"

Not as happy as you, lady. "In raptures."

“What did you tell her that was too much?”

Ginny sighed. After a moment to collect her thoughts, she repeated the conversation she had with her mother to the Impish Library-Goer, who smiled the whole time, making Ginny only angrier.

“You are very fond of your mother,” she said at the end. Ginny closed her eyes, counted to ten, and opened, looking at the psychiatrist with an impassive expression.

“Dr. Creek,” she said coolly, but it sounded too forced to be calm. “There was a time when I thought I would never see my mother again. There was a time when I was convinced that no matter what I did, I would not live to see the day when I would reunite with my family. There was a time when I thought I would never know the feeling of being in my mother’s arms again. In that time I completely rethought what my mother meant to me. I love her, and I never want to be away from her again. I never want to know that I can’t hug her. I never want to know that if I speak to her, she can’t respond. But I know that day will have to come, and I don’t want it to be true that the last thing I ever did was fight with her. I want to look back and be able to assure myself that yes, my mother and I loved each other and were aware of it. This is all I want, this is all I could ask for. So I’m trying to make her happy, I’m trying to do things for her so we have good memories.”

“That’s very astute of you,” she cooed softly, scribbling something down and smiling, moving her head side to side to some imaginary beat Ginny was sure Dr. Freak was humming in her head. Merlin she wished she could read that goddamn clipboard.

“How much longer?”

“I’m not going to tell you that,” Dr. Freak sang. She literally sang it, holding out the last word like she was in a musical. Ginny brought her hand up to her forehead, gently massaging an area that was suddenly pulsing.

“What is that?”

Ginny looked up, seeing Dr. Creep—for once not smiling—looking at her scar. Panicked, she quickly moved all her hair back over the X.

“N-nothing. It’s nothing.”

“It’s not nothing. What is it? Did they leave that on you? The people who abducted you?”

Ginny jumped up from her wheelchair unconsciously, hands shaking with anger. “They are not people. They never have and never will be people, monsters like them can never be called people! What people would kidnap a girl and abuse her so that they could get their daughter back for the sheer purpose of abusing her? What people would continue being so ridiculously obstinate after so many weeks of their time getting no response? What people could sit there and traumatize their daughter from the moment she was born to the point where she wouldn’t speak around anyone older than her, that she wouldn’t make eye contact with anyone, and that she had to be taken away from the horrible place to live in a better environment? They are horrible, insane, unstable monsters and I cannot even begin to think of them any other way than that.”

She.

Was.

Smiling.

Dr. Freak, Dr. Creep, the Impish Library-Goer had a giant freaking smile on her face, a look of amusement on her face like Ginny was being particularly comical or insanely droll. Like she was stoned and Ginny had cried out ‘packing peanuts,’ causing her to snort milk out of her nose and laugh for two hours, and was now expecting more. More, damn it!

“Someone is a little bitter.”

Ginny’s teeth slammed together in resistance of walking out of that goddamned room at that exact moment. “You think I wouldn’t be bitter? You’re supposed to be a psychologist; you’re supposed to

have at least some rough idea of how a human mind works! And you tell me things I already know and tell me that I'm bitter like that's an unreasonable thing! I was tortured, I was mistreated and I don't know why! I was abducted by those people so they could get Hermione back in their custody, and all I ended up doing was taking every single hit for her! And I'm not saying that's a bad thing, I would do it a thousand times if it meant saving any member of my family from any kind of pain, but now I can't get over it, I can't stop thinking about it! I want it to stop, I want it to be better and that's supposed to be your job, you're supposed to help me through this! But all you tell me is that I'm bitter and I'm fond of my mother and that I use humor to mask my real emotions! Three things, by the way, that I have known for quite a while! I'm not a normal kid, I haven't been normal my whole life, but goddamn it, I don't want help with that! I want help so that when I go to school in September I'm not hyperventilating at the sight of blood, fainting at the sight of knives, and waking every night of nightmares!"

Impish Library-Goer looked completely unaffected. She was still grinning. And so, when she spoke, it was with utmost excitement.

"Do you want some chocolate?"

XoXoX

"Oh, come off it, Gin, she couldn't have been that bad," Charlie said, his mouth full of food. Ginny shook her head, choosing to not follow suit of her brother and actually chew and swallow her food before replying to his disbelief.

"She was horrible! You don't believe me? After I went on a rant, she offered me chocolate with a smile on her face."

"Okay," Harry said, holding up a hand to stop the madness before it got out of hand, but mostly so he could get his joke in. "This woman must be insane. To smile after one of Ginny Weasley's rants is like keeping Hermione from reading for a week. It's a death wish."

Hermione flicked a carrot at her brother. "You're hilarious."

“So, is this Dr. Creek still alive?” Fred asked.

Ginny snorted. “Maybe Mum was right, maybe I shouldn’t have trusted the Muggle.”

“Okay, now we know the apocalypse is coming. Ginny not only kept someone alive who dared to smile after hearing her rant, but she just admitted to her mother being right. Everyone put protective wards on the house. The day of redemption has come and I have heard on talk radio that if you predict it and prepare yourself, and take the necessary precautions, then you might get a break.”

“Oh, shut it, Harry, we all know you’re the comedian of the family,” George said.

“Stop stealing all the spotlight, some of us want our chance to get a laugh as well,” Fred agreed.

Harry scoffed. “Oh stop it, I know you’re all just jealous. I mean, I’m smart, I’m obviously funny, I’m the best at Quidditch—”

The twins’ heads snapped toward each other. “Was that arrogance, George?”

“I think it was, Fred.”

They looked at Harry and shook their heads, saying at the same time, “You’ve made us proud.”

“Whodda thought it would have taken him four years to develop an ego?”

“Did you have any help from Dr. Creep, as our sister so kindly calls her?” Bill asked.

“Or Dr. Freak, Dr. Geek, or Impish Library-Goer,” Ginny said. Hermione turned to her.

“Impish Library-Goer?” she reiterated incredulously. “Where did you get Impish Library-Goer from Dr. Creek?”

"No, no, no. Impish Library-Goer comes from how she spoke. You know, I told you, like she was talking to a three-year-old, but all quiet and almost in a whisper."

"So the first thing you think of is a person in a library that is acting out?"

"Yeah, because if you talk too loudly in a library you get threatened with being kicked out. So, if you were an impish library-goer, you would speak in that voice to avoid getting kicked out. Naturally it was a very educated comparison."

Ron nodded. "Was the chocolate at least good?"

"Why? If it was would you deal with fifty-five minutes of a perpetually grinning idiot?"

"We dealt with one for almost two years, I think we can deal with one for fifty-five minutes if there are sweets involved," Charlie said.

"That's no fair, I was cute!" Ginny said with either very sincere or very well-acted outrage.

"So Dr. Freak wasn't cute?"

Ginny wrinkled her nose and shook her head. "Too big glasses, too tight French twist. Too severe."

Bill smirked. "Maybe I could loosen her up a bit."

Cries of "Oh, God!" echoed around the table, bits of food launched at him, and he laughed, dodging every bit of food or catching it and launching it back, laughing all the while it went, until they finally gave up the food fight.

"That's disgusting, Bill!" Ginny groaned.

"Your mother would be ashamed of you!" Hermione cried.

“Yeah, at least ask for a picture first!”

“Fred!”

“And a valid birth certificate, maybe a photo I.D.”

“Good idea, George.”

“All three of you are sick!” Ginny said. “I’m going to write in for brothers who don’t discuss that particular detail with their ten-year-old sister.”

“Don’t knock till you try, Gin,” Charlie said.

“Oh, okay. I’ll just go find a suitable boyfriend and have sex as soon as I can. Thanks for the enlightenment, Charlie, and as for the rest of you, blame him.”

All the brothers paled visibly, lost their smiles, and looked horrified. Hermione and Ginny high-fived under the table, but kept completely straight-faces.

The twins looked at each other, then at Ginny, looks of astonishment on their faces. “That was good.”

With that comment, the mood lightened considerably, and dinner continued.

“Where are Mum and Dad?” George asked.

Bill rolled his eyes. “Mum told us it about ten times after she finished cooking. Some adults-only party that Perkins is throwing. She didn’t want to go but Dad felt obligated. She was wearing her only good dress and complaining under her breath that she needed a new one.”

They all stared at him.

“Okay, never mind, maybe you do need a girlfriend,” Ginny said.



“Hey, I got a job, I got a family, I got money. I’m happy, what else do I need?”

Charlie swallowed his food this time before speaking to make sure his point was clearly stated and understood by all his siblings. “Sex.”

“Okay, now I’m leaving!” Ginny said, standing up and walking to her bedroom, grinning out of their view that she could do so that easily.

“Oh, come on, Gin-Gin!”

“Don’t call me ‘Gin-Gin’ or I’ll kill-kill you!”

XoXoX

“Hey, how did dinner go?” Molly asked Bill when she came into the kitchen to find him still cleaning up. He had a strange desire to always do the dishes the Muggle way, a desire none of them very much understood.

Bill shrugged. “You know, the usual. Loud talk to get the opinion in, insane descriptions about equally insane people, booming laughter, Harry predicting Armageddon, and finally ending when Ginny left the room after Charlie demanded that I get a girlfriend so I can complete the trio of money, family, sex.”

“Well, completely ignoring those last two parts, it sounds very normal and I’m glad you all had fun tonight.”

“How was your night?” Bill asked, grinning.

“Let’s see,” Arthur began, tapping his chin. “First Perkins got drunk, then his wife got drunk as well, then we never saw them again. Then some man from the Department of Magical Transportation ended up getting pissed and trying to flirt with your mother, and then after several more stumbles and people unconscious in chairs or on the floor, we helped Floo everyone home and arrived back home as the responsible ones.”

“When did you two sign up to be the Designated Floo’ers at all the Ministry parties?”

Molly rolled her eyes. “When Arthur began attending many of these functions with a pregnant wife.”

Bill smiled at his mother. “Sorry we got you the reputation as the sober one.”

Molly hugged him, but in his ear whispered, “Me too. Sometimes the only way to get through these things is drunk.”

“That’s the spirit.”

Bill pulled away and returned to the dishes. Arthur yawned widely, and Molly took his arm. “You’re going to bed.”

“Yes, Mummy,” Arthur grinned.

“Bill, why don’t you go to sleep too? I’ll finish up here, no need to stay awake.”

“Are you sure? It’s really no big deal, I can just finish up right now and you can go to bed.”

“No, I feel like doing something with my hands. Please, Bill, just go to sleep. I’ll take care of everything down here,” she said. He shrugged and walked past her, kissing her cheek and walking up the stairs past his father, who was staring at his wife.

“What is this about, Molly?” he asked. She shook her head, looking innocent.

“Nothing, Arthur. I just don’t quite want to go to sleep yet.”

He rolled his eyes and walked up the stairs, mumbling to himself, “Fine then.”

Molly sighed, took off her cloak, and started to wash the dishes. As much as she loved magic for this one reason, she honestly did not

want to go to sleep. She did not want to sleep, she did not want to have another nightmare, and she did not want her daughter to know how childish her mother was.

XoXoX

Ginny hopped out of the bed, backing up against the wall as if the mattress was out to get her.

“Bloody hell,” she whispered under her breath, silently thanking whoever was listening that Hermione was asleep. The only way she managed not to scream was because it was Dr. bloody Freak who was committing the murders this time, and the dream was rather ridiculous. The Impish Library-Goer had smiled as she killed her whole family with a chocolate bar that either concealed a knife or was unreasonably sharp.

Nonetheless, Ginny would not fall back asleep that night. Her mouth was dry from biting back any response to the dream, and so she, as silently as humanly possible, crept downstairs and into the kitchen for a glass of water.

The light was on in the kitchen, and she figured it was her parents, staying up after the party to talk for a while. But when she got into the room to see only her mother sitting at the table, staring out the window, she stopped in her tracks. It took a while for Molly to notice her standing there, but when she did, she smiled at her, and motioned for her to take a seat across from her. Reluctantly, she did. It had been longer than she cared to document since they had been in a room alone together when they weren’t discussing Ginny’s abduction or the effects of it.

“What’s up?” she asked, still smiling.

“I just wanted a glass of water,” Ginny said. “You’re up late.”

“I was staying up to do the dishes, decided to try out the Muggle way and see what of it attracts your brother so much.”

“Did you get a clue?”

“No, this particular obsession of Bill’s I believe will forever remain a conundrum to me,” she sighed. “I am of firm belief it is somewhere in his genes, though. He must have inherited it from your father.”

“Yeah,” she smiled weakly. “Must’ve.”

Molly looked at her, but the latter was looking down at the table. Finally, after a while of adjust her head, she gave up and adjusted Ginny’s, taking her chin in her hand and lifting it up to catch her eye. The look on her face firmly backed her belief that something was wrong.

“What’s wrong, dear?” she asked austere.

She closed her eyes. “I’m very worried about my mental health, because the most ridiculous dream I’ve ever had just scared the living hell out of me.”

“How is it ridiculous?”

“It was just like any other of my nightmares.”

“So the family was dying?” Molly said. Ginny nodded. “How is that ridiculous?”

Ginny chuckled. “Because it involved that Muggle psychiatrist smiling as she brutally murdered you all with a chocolate bar.”

“Wha—?”

“I’m pretty sure there was a knife hidden somewhere in it, or else I’m very worried at just how outlandish these dreams are becoming and hope this was a one-time thing.”

Molly took her daughter’s hands. “Dear, no dream is ridiculous if death is involved. No matter how ridiculous the murder weapon might seem, it’s still horrible.”

Ginny looked sideways out the window her mother had been staring out of just minutes previously.

“Harry always dies the same way,” she said suddenly. Molly turned to her, bewildered. Ginny barely glanced up at her mother before elaborating, knowing that those words would not be easily translated by her mother.

“Harry always dies the same way. In every single dream I’ve ever had, it’s never been different. And Hermione—her death is never quick, it’s never painless. The twins always look identical. And Bill and Charlie always put up a fight; they will not die until they try to avenge, and that just makes it worse, because they get more hurt when they’re trying to protect us.”

“Ssh, Ginny, it’s all right.”

“No!” she cried, standing up. At that moment it didn’t matter to her that almost the whole of the house was asleep, it didn’t matter to her how many people could hear her. “No it’s not all right! It’s not going to be all right until I stop expecting to wake up to find the whole house dead! It’s not going to be all right until I stop expecting to turn a corner and see Harry with a knife through his scar, or Hermione, bruised and bleeding to death, or the twins, with matching splotches of blood on every inch of their bodies! It’s not going to be all right and I don’t want to have to make it all right by going to Dr. Creep and then have nightmares where chocolate bars replace the knives and melted chocolate and caramel replace the blood!”

“Caramel replacing—what?” Molly stood and walked around the table to Ginny, folding her arms around her. Though she tried her hardest to fight them, tears started to roll down Ginny’s face. After a few minutes of her sobbing into Molly’s chest, the latter could only think of one thing to do.

“Ginny?”

“I’m sorry, Mum, I don’t want you to—”

“Ginny, dear, what color was the car?” she asked quietly. Ginny’s head turned up just minutely enough for her to see her mother’s face, but barely enough for her mother to see hers.

“What?”

“What color was the car, the car that they took you in?”

Ginny sniffed. “Dark. I don’t know the exact color, they clipped me with it and knocked me unconscious before I could get a good look. But it was small and dark, black, or maybe really dark blue. I’m not sure, though. Mum—why do you want to know what color the car was?”

“I guessed white,” Molly said.

“What?”

“I guessed you were sitting on the fence, you stood up, and a white car hurled out from in the shadows and grabbed you, pulling you in and hitting you over the head with something before you could get away and driving off before anyone could hear you scream. They had been waiting there all day, until you came close enough that they could get to you.”

Ginny stared at her mother incredulously.

“What are you talking about?”

“My nightmares. The ones where my children are taken and beaten and tortured to death. They all have X-shaped scars on their foreheads, except for Fred and George. They have the first letters of their names on their foreheads, so their identities could be distinguished. Harry’s scar was made out of new lines going through his existing scar to make a line of little tiny X’s stacked on top of each other.”

Ginny continued to watch her mother, awestruck.

"I can't say there are any chocolate bars, but then again I haven't met with any psychiatrists recently."

"Maybe you should," Ginny said. Molly chuckled.

"No, not that easy. You see, first you have to pester me for several months—"

"Mum," Ginny sighed, knowing right away what she was getting at.

"—then I have to be petulantly pigheaded about not going for all those several months—"

"Mum."

"—then of course I need to befriend a girl who believes in anything she reads about, which might set me back a while, and treat her like a psychiatrist, but never really getting a good answer from her at all, just some ears—"

"Mum!"

"—then, after you wake me up from a horrible nightmare, I finally divulge too much of the inner workings of my mind and you look so crushed that I say I will attend one session to make you happy, but then, in a complete one-eighty, sign off with an expression of my hate for you."

"Mum, please!"

Molly smiled at her. "I'll go if you keep going."

"Not to Dr. Freak," Ginny said immediately. Molly chuckled.

"Of course not. We'll go to a wizard this time."

"Then it's a deal."

"Okay. Let's try to get some sleep," Molly said, getting Ginny a glass of water and helping her up the stairs. Not only was she tired, but she

had been standing much too long, and now could barely support herself.

“Good night, Mum.”

“I love you, Ginny.”

“Love you too,” she said, getting into bed. As Molly was walking out the door, she heard her mumble indistinctly to herself, “If they offer us chocolate I’m bolting.”

A/n Do you want to know something terrifying? Dr. Creek is an actual person. She was a grief counselor that came to our school in fourth grade when one of my friends died of leukemia. Because I was close to her, my teachers, before even observing my behavior whatsoever, all but pushed me into her office. In short, she basically told me I had befriended Melissa because I had a “dented self-esteem” and she made me feel good about myself. She concluded that now that Melissa was gone, I would feel lost and alone. This was all decided before I had said a word past, “Hello, how are you? My name is Alison, thank you for taking the time to see me today.”

She, too, offered me chocolate, and now I can no longer eat miniature Reese’s Cups without thinking of Dr. Creek, who talked like...an Impish Library-Goer and smiled the whole way through, even when she said the word ‘dead.’ But as I tell the story today, I often refer to her as ‘Dr. Creep’ or ‘Dr. Freak.’ It has become an inside joke among my friends that whenever I look sad they will ask me about my dented self-esteem and offer me chocolate. Good times.

So, anyway. High school. Honors classes. A lot of Honors classes. AP classes. A lot of AP classes. Bleh. My gym teacher knows me as ‘Nietzsche Girl’ because she can’t remember my name and I was reading Beyond Good and Evil when they were passing out clothes.

I’ll try to update soon. Homework isn’t bad yet, and so far the only thing difficult in class is not staring at my Lit teacher’s giant mole (I daydream about it eating students), however, it is REALLY hard to write the Dobby scene situated in the Burrow.



Ja, mata!

Disclaimer! From the Happy Birthday song to the nursery rhymes you enjoyed as a child, public domain is often a great thing. But do you want to know something that isn't public domain? Firstly, now the It's A Wonderful Life soundtrack, but even more troublesome than that, Harry Potter is not public domain. Therefore, I must state that I do not own this, this is not mine, and unless J.K. Rowling's heir forgets to renew the copyright, it never will be. Luckily, if that happens, there's no soundtrack to Harry Potter.

A/n This chapter contains one of the most difficult scenes I had ever needed to write for this story. As I went on writing it, I realized more and more ways how it was necessary to make it differ from canon. So I apologize in advance, because not only that, but I obstinately decided that I would not refer to the canon whilst writing it. Stupid, stupid me. Either way, please to enjoy.

"We love that game but we never play, 'cause we will lose and we wanna stay the way we are, the way we've been for far too long."  
--Motion City Soundtrack, "Feels Like Rain"

Ginny stumbled out of the Floo and stepped into her wheelchair, looking up at Molly, who was smiling down at her.

"That was helpful, wasn't it?"

At that question, Ginny burst into laughter, unable to contain herself. Molly laughed along with her, doubled over. Finally, as their laughter subsided, and they had tears in their eyes and blood gathered behind their cheeks, Ginny shook her head.

"No. Not in the least bit," she chuckled.

"It wasn't horrible."

Ginny nodded. "Yes, it was. While I won't have dreams of chocolate bars, I will have dreams of squeaky-voiced sock puppets."

"You're right, that was atrocious."

"Well, I'm going to go meet Luna."

“Have fun.”

In response, Ginny let out a loud, deep grunt, which Molly returned a moment later, only to have both of them go into fits of laughter.

XoXoX

“Did the therapy with your mother help you know more about the nightmares at all?” Luna asked. Ginny snorted.

“No. All it taught me was that socks go on the feet and it should stay that way forever and ever.”

“Was it really bad?”

Ginny shook her head and launched into her recollection of what had gone on.

: Begin Flashback:

“Now, Molly and Ginny, I’m going to use sock puppets to show a few examples of some different mother-daughter relationships. Tell me which ones represent your relationship best.”

The two Weasleys exchanged a look of fear before turning back to their psychologist, who now had a rainbow-striped sock on his left hand and an orange-on-purple sock on his right hand. They now doubted the reliability of this psychologist, wondering if perhaps he went to one himself, and regretted ever visiting him. The man had socks on his hands. “Now, this polka-dot sock will represent Ginny, and this pretty striped one will represent Molly.”

He cleared his throat, and when he spoke next, it was in a high, squeaking voice that made Ginny and Molly both jump.

“Mum, give me a broom!” the “Ginny” sock demanded (or at least they thought, the arm that housed the “Ginny” sock raised slightly above the one for the “Molly” sock).

The next voice—for the striped “Molly” sock—was deep and scratchy, like a grouchy old man. “NO!”

Molly turned to Ginny as the latter’s polka-dot sock representation stood firm. “Do I talk like that?” she mouthed. Ginny shook her head.

“Healer, I don’t think that’s a very good portrayal of our relationship,” Molly said. The Healer nodded and cleared his throat once again.

“How about this?” he said, straightening “Ginny” from her spirited arguing. A second later, a deep, scratchy grunt issued from his mouth as his arm, again, raised the sock slightly. As it lowered, the other sock raised, and he made the same sound.

While the Healer looked at them expectedly and the Weasleys waited for something to happen, there was silence. After a second or two Molly said, “That’s it?”

“Yes.”

“What is that, some type of greeting?” Ginny said. “We’re not gorillas, we tend to use words frequently, at every chance we get.”

The Healer nodded, making a humming sound in acknowledgement, and scribbled something on the parchment next to him, holding the quill with the polka-dot sock. Molly and Ginny exchanged another glance.

“All right, how about this one?” he asked, and held the two puppets up. After a second of nothing, the Molly sock attacked the Ginny sock, and his fingers and wrists moved frantically as they fought.

The two Weasleys stared at the sock scuffle with bewildered expressions before Molly finally spluttered, “No! No, no, no!”

He stared at them, a studying look on his face as he nodded. “No? Okay, good, good. That’s good.”

And he scribbled something else on this parchment and then straightened up his socks for another show.

“Okay, Healer Poena, with all due respect, I think this is a waste of all of our time. My mum and I have absolutely no problem with communication. We talk well, we talk a lot, we love each other and are both aware of it. We are here because we are having nightmares of the each other being hurt and would like to be able to learn and take the necessary steps to conquer them. This has nothing to do with how we greet each other upon walking into the room.”

The psychologist shook his head. “Now, Ginny, I don’t believe that is true. I think this has everything to do with your communication.”

“Fine, then, if you believe that. Could we at least skip past all the ones you deem bad relationships, especially ones that have anything to do with physical abuse, that’s a bit of a sore spot in our family.”

“Of course, of course.”

Ginny turned to her mother, who looked like she was biting back a smile.

“Okay...how about this?” he asked, and the toes of the socks colliding, pulling apart, and then colliding again. It took a minute for Ginny to find out what he was doing.

“Whoa,” she said, holding up a hand. “While we may be purebloods, we’re not big fans of incest, and if you would like to suggest it, please keep it heterosexual. I do have six brothers you know, if I was the face of incest I don’t think I’d have to get it on with my mother.”

“Ginny!”

“I’m just saying, Mum. It’s not like I’m feeling very anti-establishment today.”

Healer Poena nodded. “Did you know you use humor to mask your true emotions, Ginny?”

“No, thank you for the enlightenment. I’ll make a note you were the first to point it out to me for when it comes time to write my memoirs.”

He nodded again and scribbled something on the parchment.

: End Flashback:

XoXoX

“Next time, Harry! Tomorrow we’re having a rematch!” Ron said, still angry that it was deemed “too dark to play” by his still very amused mother.

“Yeah, uh huh, okay,” he mumbled. “Maybe we should go back to having Ginny and Hermione chuck apples at us, you usually managed to save those.”

“Not funny.”

Harry rolled his eyes and opened the door to their bedroom, letting out a loud yelp and jumping backward.

“Who are you and why are you in our bedroom?” Harry asked the creature that was sitting on his bed.

“My name is Dobby, sir. Dobby the house-elf,” the creature said, jumping up off the bed.

“Care to answer the latter part of the question?” Harry asked, vaguely aware of Ron standing behind him, staring at Dobby.

“I am here to see Harry Potter, sir!”

“Well here I am. Pleasure to meet you,” he said as politely as he could pull off. Dobby bowed so low his long nose jammed against the floor.

“But there is more than that, sir. Dobby is here to tell you, sir...but it is difficult, sir...Dobby wonders where to begin...”

Harry looked behind him at Ron. “Well, why don’t you sit down? We can talk.”

Dobby just looked at him. For a few seconds. Then he burst into tears. Sobs. Wails. Like bombs were going off.

In desperation, Harry looked to Ron, who had an expression that clearly matched the emotion Harry was feeling at that moment: fear, confusion, and what the bloody hell?! all mixed into one neat package.

“I’m sorry, did I offend you? I didn’t mean to, it was just, I thought I was being polite—”

“Dobby is not offended, sir. Dobby has heard of Harry Potter’s greatness, but never has Dobby ever been asked to sit down by a wizard before.”

Ron snorted. “Who’ve you been hanging out with?”

Dobby looked confused. Harry sighed.

“What he means is that if you’ve never been asked to sit down, you probably haven’t been spending your time with many decent wizards,” Harry clarified, and Dobby looked somewhere between amused and in the midst of a huge realization.

“No,” he said. “I haven’t.”

And there went the wails. He ran over to the wall and proceeded to bang his head against it. Hard. Like he was trying to smash his brains.

“STOP!” Harry cried, running over and pulling him away. “What are you doing, Dobby?” He asked when he placed him on a chair.

“Dobby is sorry, Harry Potter, but Dobby almost spoke ill of his family, sir.”

“Your family?”

“House-elves are bound to serve one family for their lives, sir must know. We must never insult our masters, sir.”

“What do you mean, bound to serve?”

“We cannot leave them, sir. All the orders they say must be followed, under all and any circumstances. We cannot defy their orders.”

“If you do?”

“Dobby is required to subject his-self to punishment, sir.”

“Who makes you do this? Who are you masters?”

“Mr. and Mrs. Malfoy, sir.”

XoXoX

Fred stopped what he was doing and stared toward the top floor of the Burrow, his face blank and his hands motionless. George waved his own hand in front of his twin’s eyes.

“Are you okay, Fred?”

“My someone-is-talking-about-Malfoy radars went off.”

XoXoX

“Do they know you are here?”

“No, no, of course not. Dobby will have to punish his-self when he gets back, sir.”

“Why are you here, Dobby?” Harry asked, sitting down on his bed.

“Dobby is here to warn Sir, to warn him, and tell him that he must not return to Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry this year.”

“What?” Harry said without skipping a beat. “No way. I have to go back. I’m not going to stay home all year.”

“But sir must!”



“Why?”

“Bad things are going to happen at Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry this year, and Harry Potter must not be part of it!” Dobby cried, and Harry turned to exchange a look with Ron, whose expression was unreadable. Harry shook his head.

“What are you talking about, Dobby?” he asked.

“Harry Potter must believe me, sir. Terrible things will happen at Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry this year, and Harry Potter must avoid them at all costs! They have been plotting, sir...oh, Dobby has known for months. He must keep sir safe, no matter what punishment he faces!”

“Dobby, what are you talking about? What terrible things? Who are ‘they’?”

The house-elf looked tortured. “Dobby cannot tell, sir! All Dobby can do is warn you, tell you not to attend school this year. Harry Potter will be in danger, sir, and Dobby cannot let this happen!” he said matter-of-factly, very confident for wearing a potato sack.

“What about my family, Dobby? Ron, Hermione, Fred, George, Percy—I mean, Ginny is going to start school this year, too. They’ll be in danger as well. Everyone will be in danger, won’t they? I can’t sit around at home when my classmates and my family are in grave danger.”

Dobby shook his head. “But sir’s family and friends are not in danger. Harry Potter is a special case.”

“I think I can deal with it, Dobby.”

“No! Dobby must not let Harry Potter attend Hogwarts!”

“Dobby, I have to!”

“Harry Potter must promise!”

“I won’t, Dobby. I’m not going to stay here. I’m going to Hogwarts this year and there’s nothing you can do to stop me!” Harry said.

“Harry, what’s going on, what are you yelling—oh. Wh—who is this?”

“Hermione, this is Dobby. Dobby the house-elf,” Harry said as the elf bowed low to the ground. Hermione raised her eyebrows.

“Strange. I didn’t hear anyone knock.”

“Dobby is here to warn me, Hermione,” Harry informed her. “He says that I should not attend Hogwarts this year, due to evil plots that are going down.”

“Plots as in secret hostile plans or plots as in small pieces of land?”

“Yes. Small yet evil pieces of land are being places at Hogwarts, and Dobby has come to warn me to stay away from the gardeners.”

“It was just a question.”

“Dobby is serious, sir. Harry Potter must promise to not attend Hogwarts this year.”

“Why does this mean so much to you, Dobby? No matter what you say I’m going to Hogwarts this year. Please, Dobby, just go home.”

“I cannot go home until Harry Potter agrees, sir! Until he promises!”

“Well I won’t promise so you’re wasting your breath. Go home. Now.”

“This is a mistake, Harry Potter!”

“Good to know.”

Harry’s face was so serious, so straight, and so coolly angry that Hermione honestly believed the house-elf got scared. At that moment, she truly thought that if you told Harry the Dursleys were all comatose, he still wouldn’t have been the least bit happy. Not even a pinprick. Something about the message, about the warning that he would not

be safe at Hogwarts, really ticked him off, and he, as usual, seemed rather passive about the whole thing.

Dobby sighed, "I warned you."

And with a crack, the house-elf was gone.

XoXoX

The three of them decided not to tell anyone about Dobby the house-elf, and though Fred's 'someone-is-talking-about-Malfoy' radar was much too powerful for their own good, they managed to get past it with a great-minds-think-alike moment in which they all said they were just insulting him out-of-the-blue.

Of course, the big discussion around the table that night was the skillful reenactment of the therapy session with Healer Poena, and they were torn on which was more interesting: Healer or Muggle doctor. While the latter did have more creative nicknames, the former used sock puppets to represent people.

"I think Dr. Creep is better, I'm sorry."

"No, no, no. C'mon? Chocolate versus sock puppets, Hermione."

"Smiling after one of Ginny's rants versus sock puppets, Charlie."

"Touché."

"How about we compromise on they both suck and you lot are never going back."

"Are you kidding? Dr. Freak still hasn't met Hermione. She'd love to. How much chocolate can you ingest in fifty-five minutes? I bet it's a lot. So, you bring your stomach, I'll bring my sister, and me, you, and Dr. Creep will all have a nice outing at the library. Oh, I'm sorry, she can't go there. She might get kicked out."

"Gin—"

“Oh, calm down.”

“We got your Hogwarts letters today,” Molly said, breaking in.

“Introducing Molly Weasley, née Prewett, the Queen of Segues,” Harry said.

“Diagon Alley soon?”

“Within weeks,” Ron said.

“Weeks symbolizing no more than three,” George finished.

Hermione shook her head. “Patience is a virtue, brothers.”

A/n Okay, sorry to make you wait so long only to produce one of the top three shortest chapters of this story, including chapter seven, which I made short on purpose. But this is my seventh draft of this chapter, and I only forced myself to write it because I’m been horribly sick and had to do something. So, chances are it sucked, but things will happen. And next chapter will be long, promise.

Now I have to sleep. I have gotten no more than three hours of sleep each night for the last five days, and now it’s nearly three-thirty in the morning here, and I have to get up early to go to the doctor and then pretend to care about trigonometry to do my homework.

Ja ne!

Disclaimer! Hello. I'm Alison, and I'm a clinical Potterholic. It's a problem I've been dealing with for a long time. It started with delusions. The thirty-first of July before I was to turn eleven, I spent the day sobbing in my room because I had not received my letter to Hogwarts. That same year, I started feeling powerful; I owned Harry Potter. I am J.K. Rowling. Luckily, I was talked out of it in time; I started writing fanfiction. I started to place disclaimers at the top of each chapter, as a reminder to myself and others that I do not own Harry Potter, that I am not J.K. Rowling. Sometimes the denial strikes up, but luckily, reviewers correct me. I hope to stop the delusions in this six-week course.

A/n So, basically, since the last update, I broke my hand and had to “stay away from typing” for two weeks, having to resort to updating only what I already had written, which was, unfortunately, not this story. Then, after two detentions for chewing gum and four because me and one of my friends swiped some paint from her art class and painted each other's faces green,—we weren't even caught until they saw us returning the paint and brushes—I was sent to, instead of the principal, my counselor, who told me I was going through a “rebellious phase” and made me attend daily sessions to try and find the cause. Yesterday he canceled them and told me I had just turned thirteen. Big discovery there, man. He told me that it was normal for rebellion to begin when one is trying to enter the “big leagues of adolescence” and that it was especially hard for me to relate to everyone being so much older than me. Anyway, that took up a lot of my time, and when I finally sat down to try and write this chapter, all that came out was a rant about why I had delayed so long on writing this chapter, which is what you are reading now. But now I'm going to try to actually write something you care about.

“There must be few things a hot bath won't cure, but I don't know many of them.”

--The Bell Jar by Sylvia Plath

“How are you doing, Ginny?”

“I'm fine, Mum,” she sighed.

“Because really, we could—”

“Twenty-eight,” Harry mumbled to Hermione, who giggled. Molly turned around, looking at them warily.

“What are you two giggling about? And twenty-eight what exactly?”

“We’re counting how many times Ginny has to tell you she’s fine until you actually believe her,” Harry said. “I bet it wouldn’t break thirty, but Hermione and Ron had more confidence in you, they already lost in the teens. Ginny just laughed and said we would eventually run out of numbers and our brains would malfunction. So now I’m against Fred and George, who reckon it’ll break forty. Though I suppose it won’t be much of a competition now, considering you know about it.”

“Oh, quiet you,” she said, rolling her eyes. “I hate it when she’s in that...thing.”

“Yes, because you know it’s pure Quidditch for me,” Ginny said, unconsciously twitching her foot. She then looked at her mother with a gleam in her eye, smiling sweetly. “Speaking of which, Mummy...when can I—”

“No, Ginny, Capio says it’s not near time for that,” Molly said, sighing as another street merchant tried to offer her something to prevent her cauldrons from rusting and hair extensions.

“Will you count that?” Ginny said, turning to Harry. “Count that, she’s now trusting my physical therapist over me concerning my state of being. Next thing you know she’ll be trusting Lucius Malfoy to do the grocery shopping.”

“Okay, let’s first stop at Gringotts, then we can map out where we need to go,” Molly said, making it sound almost like a perfect segue. “Where’s Arthur with the twins and Percy?”

“Molly, I really, really wish you would just let me pay for—”

“Harry James Potter,” she said, swinging around, her hands on her hips. “I will not have you paying for schoolbooks.”

“Well how about at least Ginny’s first-year stuff? A wand, robes, an owl, a cauldron, potion kits, stuff like that? Please, Molly, you know how much that would mean to me,” Harry said, giving her the best ‘remember me, I’m the raven-haired one’ look that he could muster at that moment. She scrutinized him for a moment, looking like she wouldn’t fall for that trick again, but then sighed, her shoulders falling.

“Fine. But I’m paying for all the books.”

“Are you sure? It’s Lockhart stuff, very expensi—”

“Harry James Potter, what did I say?”

He grinned and nodded. “Yes, Molly.”

They found the twins at a joke shop, Percy at a quill shop next door, and Arthur poking around a magazine rack in between the two stores. After withdrawing money from Gringotts, Molly’s usual scolding to Harry after spotting, again, that there was more money in the Weasley vault than there ought to be, followed by several ashamed looks from Harry, and even more guilty looks from Molly after seeing the ashamed looks from Harry, they managed to finally get to Ollivander’s, their first stop.

It was quicker than they thought. Ollivander did talk to them for quite a while, but they made up for it as the second wand they tried seemed to take a liking to Ginny; it shot a fountain of golden and silver sparks that nearly set the counter on fire. Everyone stocked up on potion supplies, and Ginny got a pewter cauldron, all in the course of just a few minutes. But what slowed them down were the robes. With Ron growing at a rapid pace, he needed new robes, and Harry insisted on buying robes for Hermione as well. Molly, much to Harry’s relief, was kept quiet the whole time by Arthur, who seemed more understanding of Harry’s desire to buy the world for his family than Molly did.

Finally, with all of Ginny’s first year essentials and secondhand textbooks in her cauldron, she held it on her lap as they walked into Flourish and Blotts so that Harry could buy his books and purchase, on the sly, any books that made Hermione’s eyes twinkle, whatever

book Percy was analyzing, and some trinkets for Ron, Fred, and George. He almost bought something for Ginny, but she groaned and told him he needed to visit Dr. Creep.

XoXoX

"I am so glad I got out of that," Harry mumbled, ruffling his hair after finally getting away from Lockhart. He tipped the books he had gotten from the freak into the cauldron on Ginny's lap, ignoring her grumbles about not being a trunk.

"Famous Harry Potter," a drawling voice cried out from a few feet away. In seconds they found themselves facing Draco Malfoy in all his silvery-blond haired, pale-skinned horror. "can't even go into a bookshop without making the front page."

"Jealous much, Malfoy? I believe the last time your family made the front page was when that girl publically humiliated your father. Oh, was she ten years old? Oh, that's right! She's also my sister," Harry said coldly. Malfoy narrowed his eyes and took a step forward.

"I'd watch my back if I were you. My father—"

"Is standing right behind you," Hermione said coolly, her arms crossed over her chest, watching Ron holding the back of Harry's shirt protectively. "Hello, Mr. Malfoy."

"Long time no see, Mr. Malfoy," Ginny said.

"Ah," Lucius said. "How could I forget? Miss Weasley. Miss Weasley. Mr. Weasley. And last but surely not least, Mr. Potter. I hope my son has not caused you too much trouble, and am deeply sorry if he has. It is a true honor to be in your acquaintance, Mr. Potter."

"What a wonderful greeting," Harry said kindly. Then his whole face dropped along with his act and he said, brusquely, "Hi."

"Not using your Order of Merlin money, are you now?" Lucius asked, in perfect transition, picking up one of Ginny's books from her cauldron—the one she suspected had probably gone through seven



thousand owners before finally becoming hers—and turned it over in his hands, cracking it less than an inch open at one point, only to draw his head back quickly, as if hit in the eye with a large puff of air.

“I wouldn’t use that money if my life depended on it,” Ginny retorted. “It was donated.”

“Perhaps you should have donated it to purchasing better books,” Lucius said. Glaring, Ginny took her book back from him.

At that moment, Arthur showed up. After a series of exchanged comments between the two adults, most concerning Arthur’s inadequacy, lack of money or useless career, a punch was thrown. And another. And before they knew it, a fight had broken out between the two.

Harry, immediately, instinctively, spun on heel and took Hermione into his arms, burying her face in his chest, blocking her view of the fight. The twins went to try and pull their father off of Malfoy, and Ron took the liberty of covering Ginny’s eyes, which she already had plastered closed.

“Ron,” Harry mumbled to his brother, nodding to the girls. “Let’s get them out of here.”

He nodded, and they were in a second outside of Flourish and Blotts, managing to have maneuvered around the crowd that had gathered to watch the two men fight. As soon as they were out and the door was closed, Ginny took a gasping breath, coughing and panting.

“You two okay?” Harry asked, brushing hair off of Hermione’s forehead. “You’ve haven’t seen many brawls since the Sir and Ma’am Chronicles—are you doing all right?”

“I’m fine,” Hermione said, her eyes closed tightly.

“Gin? Are you all right?”

“Yes,” Ginny said, her face red from coughing.

“What was the coughing fit?” Ron asked worriedly, kneeling next to her.

“Precaution,” Harry assured him, mussing Ginny’s hair. “Don’t breathe, don’t smell, right?”

“Right,” she panted. “I’m better now.”

“Good to know,” Ron mumbled, smoothing her hair over her scar. Ginny smiled meekly.

XoXoX

“I’d like to apologize to everyone,” Arthur said. “I got angry, but I was not thinking. My actions were foolish, and more than that they were wrong and highly unethical.”

“You’re apologizing for punching Lucius Malfoy in the face?” Fred said.

“You’re sorry that you did?” George smirked.

He stopped for a moment. “It was wrong.”

“But you’re not sorry,” George said.

“I—”

“What we think he’s trying to say,” Fred said, standing up. “Is that while he is not sorry he hit Lucius Malfoy—”

“Frankly who would be?” Bill mumbled.

“He was forced by our lovely mother to apologize to us,” George continued.

“To teach us that violence is wrong and never the answer—”

“Even though due to a series of events we have learned of and/or experienced in our lives—”

"We already know this to be true."

"And we realize Dad should not fought Malfoy," George assured everyone.

"It was just really cool to see," Fred concluded with a nod to his father.

XoXoX

Harry was pacing the room, Ron and Hermione on the bed in front of him. They often exchanged looks that so clearly said 'Do you know what's going on?' that they didn't even require an answer further than a nod or shaking of the head. The latter, however, was the usual response, and so they were at a loss, forced now to wait for Harry to actually use words.

Ron, growing impatient, finally blurted, "What's going on, Harry?"

"This is bothering me," Harry said. Just as Ron was about to comment, no doubt with something along the lines of "duh" or "obviously," he continued without giving any care. "Dobby, the Malfoy's house-elf, tells me that something was going to happen at Hogwarts this year. He says that people were plotting. Then, we get cornered in the bookshop by the Malfoys, Draco who tells us that he would be watching his back in our situation. What could that mean?" he wondered, mostly to himself. But the next statement was focused entirely on his siblings. "Something's not right, you two. Something is not right at all."

"What are you planning on doing about it exactly, Harry?" Hermione asked petulantly, as if she was bothered by the same things.

"I don't know," Harry said, shaking his head. "But we're going to do something."

"Bloody hell, you two!" Ron barked, throwing his arms up in indignation. "We risked our lives last year!"

Harry turned on him. "I don't care what we did last year, Ron! Lucius Malfoy is up to something and I think Draco is in on it! We know about Draco, we know we can't trust him, but Lucius Malfoy is who I am worried about. Arthur does not trust Lucius Malfoy!" he shouted, obviously trying to show that this should be a forehead-slapping realization moment. He groaned when it did not seem to click. "If Arthur doesn't trust him, he's dodgy as hell."

"How can we trust Dobby?" Hermione asked. "Maybe the Malfoys aren't behind this. Maybe they want us to think they're behind it, so they sent their house-elf to tell us that they were. House-elves are bound to do anything for their masters. It's as close to slavery as you can get."

"Do you really think they're that smart?"

"I think the Malfoys are capable of anything, Harry," Hermione said. "I'm just trying to think of a thousand different scenarios and a thousand different solutions. Right now, I don't see why—not even mentioning how—a house-elf would venture out of the manor of those they are serving, especially one as strict as I imagine the Malfoys being, to warn someone that their family could potentially be plotting against...it doesn't make sense. Either it's the Malfoys' plan, or Dobby is one special house-elf."

XoXoX

Ginny sighed and stood up, pacing her bedroom and rolling her shoulders back and forth. How she hated that chair. It made her feel like an invalid, like every single thing she had been working for had been for naught, like she had made absolutely no progress whatsoever.

The fight today at Flourish and Blotts, unlike many people seemed to have believed, did not scare her, or faze her, or bring up bad memories for her. She was, however, rather glad Harry and Ron had gotten her out of there before she had to breathe, otherwise she probably would have had a completely different opinion of the whole matter.

Probably the worst thing of that day was Lucius Malfoy's comments. To her, to Harry, to her father—it was simply irritating. Not so much that he told them they were poor, or that he looked down so much on her father's job, but that he just seemed so sure about it all. As if he knew, in whatever form of heart and soul he possessed, that the fact that he had more money, no matter how that money was obtained, made him better than those who did not have it. He spent the whole of his life focusing on being arrogant, spreading the message just so that everyone knew he deemed himself better than them, and that by his standards, society set it in stone.

It was the Muggle Acts all over again.

He had a wand, which immediately gave him supreme power over the Muggles. It was not fate, or destiny, or God, or whatever controlled everything that had power over the Muggles, rather, those who could cast spells—the ones they were unaware of. However, even in their ignorance, their naïveté, they were supposed to acknowledge these wizard rulers. They did not know they existed, they filed stories of wizards under the fantasy section, yet they were to acknowledge them as their supreme rulers and beg their forgiveness for their refusal to accept the truth of the matter. Because Lucius Malfoy had a wand, it gave him a throne, a crown, and a nice, pure gold walking stick with some kind of symbolic ornament on the handle, that hit the ground with a loud noise which echoed even in rooms that don't have echoes, just so that the worker bees knew when their leader arrived.

And those Muggle-lovers, those blood traitors—they supported the ignorance. They accepted the fact that sometimes world need to be divided, but by no means that meant the people had to be divided. Keep the Wizarding world and the Muggle world separate, but don't segregate the people. While the worlds might be different—hell, one might even be better than the other—that did not mean that the people were different, that the people were better than the other.

In Malfoy's eyes, this was simply inexcusable. How could someone believe that wizards were not better than those without magic?

Ginny stopped her pacing and sat on the bed, letting out a monstrous groan to herself and arching her back against the mattress, looking at

the cauldron next to the door. It was full of her schoolbooks. Her ratty Transfiguration text, the one Malfoy had been so fascinated by, was right in front, sticking out a bit from the others. Gritting her teeth, she sat up, so fast it made her slightly dizzy, and stumbled over to the cauldron, picked up the book, and shook her head.

"It's not that bad," she mumbled. She swiped her thumb across the spine, and cardboard flaked to the ground. At that, she scowled and threw the book at the wall.

She gasped when another book flew out of it and hit the wall as well. They bounced off the wall and fluttered to the floor about two feet away. Ignoring the Transfiguration text, she picked up the other book, a small, flimsy black one, which looked like it had been stuffed in many pockets over its life. She flipped through the pages, seeing nothing written on the old, yellow parchment. Confused, she searched the covers, only to find, on the back cover, hidden in the corner, was a neatly written line.

T.M. Riddle, 1942.

Wow, Ginny thought. I was right. This book has probably been sitting in that shop for years.

Vaguely, she wondered who would buy a diary and not write in it, let alone leave it in a Transfiguration book. Then, of course, she wondered how old her textbook must be if there was a diary from fifty years before hidden inside.

Just what I need, she sighed inwardly. Wheelchair, stand-out scar, important siblings, and outdated textbooks. Just my luck I'll write a completely inaccurate essay for modern day.

So she walked over to the Transfiguration book, angered now at herself for feeling tired. She flipped to the front and scanned the copyright information.

Copyright 1989.

“What the hell?” she mumbled to herself. A diary was stuffed in a book that wasn’t even published until forty-seven years later?

Figuring she’d consult Hermione about it later, she placed it in her desk drawer, on top of her own diary, briefly noting that her nightmares had diminished in intensity somewhat. She had barely even written in her diary for a week.

Twenty-nine.

The number suddenly popped into her head. She realized Harry had said that number early that afternoon, when he was counting the amount of times her mother asked her if she was okay before she finally believed her. At first, Ginny had thought it was funny. It was rather annoying, but she could always laugh about it.

That, however, was before they tacked numbers onto the whole thing.

When it reached the teens, she started to get very riled by it all. The amount of times Molly asked her had surpassed her age. Had surpassed Harry’s age, and Ron’s age, and Hermione’s age, and eventually, the twins’ age, and Percy’s age—of course, once it surpassed Bill’s age, she got rather infuriated. She was fine.

Why did no one want to accept that?

XoXoX

“Do you think he’s still pissed off?” Ron asked, looking at his brother and sister.

“About what?”

“Gin. She publicly humiliated him, and there’s nothing more the Malfoys care about than image. Maybe he is still bitter about the fact that she managed to convince the Ministry to vote against him, not to mention making him have that outburst like that. Especially after he set her up to look like a git and a nutter.”

“Ron,” Hermione said approvingly, almost proudly. “That was astute and logical. I’m so proud of you.”

“I do come up with good ideas every once in a while,” he mumbled, his ears turning red.

“I dunno, though,” Harry said, pacing faster now. “If that was true, how would he get back at her without it being tied back to him? And for that matter, why would Dobby warn me? Why wouldn’t he warn Ginny? Besides, Draco was talking to us three when he was warning us; he wasn’t saying a word to Gin...”

“Maybe this isn’t about her,” Hermione said, a Lumos charm lighting above her head. “Dumbledore played a big part in the opposition of the Muggle Acts, too. Bigger than Ginny. And we all know Malfoy isn’t too fond of Dumbledore to begin with.”

“What are you saying, Hermione?” Ron asked.

She turned to him. “Maybe he’s not trying to get back at Ginny. Maybe he’s trying to get back at Dumbledore. Trying to discredit him. And he’s killing two birds with one spell, trying to discredit Harry as well.”

“Why?”

“I don’t know,” she said, shaking her head and looking at the floor. “But he’ll create an uproar at Hogwarts—something to do with Harry. It will get the school governors and the Ministry wondering, challenging whether Dumbledore is a suitable headmaster. Then, they’ll bust Harry for whatever’s going on, and get him out of the school, too.”

As a dramatic silence overtook the room, a knock sounded at the door, making them all jump about their height out of their trainers. Harry swung the door open to reveal Charlie, leaning casually against the doorjamb.

“You three will have ages to talk at Hogwarts,” he said. “Right now, Mum is utterly distraught because she realized she will be waving



goodbye to her youngest child this September. So come down for dinner and eat a lot so she can absorb the essence of her children.”

Harry, Hermione, and Ron smiled before the latter two stood and they all made their way downstairs.

XoXoX

“Are you coming to bed?” Ginny asked Hermione after dinner. The older girl shook her head.

“Harry has a conspiracy theory. We’re working out the kinks.”

“Wicked,” Ginny grinned. “I love Harry’s paranoid thoughts that someone is always scheming against the world.”

Hermione chuckled awkwardly, and it sounded very close to fake. “Er...yeah. Well, I’m going to go help him. I might be late, maybe until Molly breaks us up. I’ll try not to wake you up if you’re asleep, okay?”

With that, she scurried up the flights of stairs to the top floor where Harry and Ron stayed. Ginny raised an eyebrow, but then stood from her seat and headed toward the stairs herself. Before she could make it halfway through the doorway, her father stopped her.

“Hi, Gin,” he said, smiling. She leaned against the doorframe and nodded.

“Nice to see you. It’s been ages. How’s the wife and kids?” Ginny asked. Arthur laughed.

“You would know, wouldn’t you?” he mumbled. “Look, I just wanted to apologize to you specifically for what I did today. It was very wrong. It was just...Malfoy tormented you through all...that, and he tried to get rid of my job, and he’s always acting so superior to me...it’s stupid.”

“No, Dad,” she said. “It’s not stupid. It’s reasonable. Fred and George are right. Malfoy’s an arrogant prat who thinks he’s too good for peons like us. Punch him when he deserves it, Dad, and don’t worry about a single other person. Because no matter what the initial

reaction is, in the long run, everyone will wish they were you, the one who got to dole out the blow.”

He snorted. “The problem with that is that if I punched him whenever he deserved it, I’d never have time to do anything else.”

Ginny smiled. “Now the real question. Did you enjoy it?”

He looked around. “Kinda.”

“Would you do it again?”

“I’d pay money to punch Malfoy in the face.”

“I think most would,” she said. She gave him a quick hug. “I’m going to bed. I’m exhausted.”

“Okay. Goodnight, sweetie. Love you.”

“Love you. Oh, and don’t tell Mum I said I was exhausted.”

He snapped his fingers. “That reminds me. Did I win the bet?”

Ginny shook her head. “Twenty-nine.”

XoXoX

Ginny sat in bed, looking at the book. Riddle. She didn’t know anything about the last name. And 1942 didn’t jump out in her mind as ‘YOU NEED TO REMEMBER THIS YEAR!!’ in any way whatsoever.

Twenty-nine...

Her father knew about the dream diary. He even read part of it. Hermione and Molly knew about it as well. And her experience with therapy was so laughable that she almost thought it was an elaborate joke of Fred and George’s. Wouldn’t it be wonderful if she could write her feelings?

She couldn't talk to her parents. They would go mental. They already asked if she was all right when she had said twenty-eight times before that she was. They already apologized for getting angry. They already rearranged her furniture so she never had a reason to go out after dark ever again.

She couldn't talk to Hermione. She would go mental. She already asked every morning how the nightmares were progressing. She already stayed awake with her every night until she fell asleep, even if she was exhausted. She already spent parts of her days helping her make it down staircases.

She couldn't talk to her brothers. They would go mental. They already told her they loved her. They already knelt down next to her and spoke in soft voices when she had a panic attack, even when she snapped out of it immediately. They already forgave her for anything before she finished the apology.

She couldn't talk to Luna. She would hum in acknowledgement and turn her head.

She couldn't talk to Dr. Freak. She would offer her chocolate and smile at her.

She couldn't talk to Healer Poena. He would ask her to demonstrate using her footwear.

So why not talk to herself?

...You know what I mean.

She cracked open the book, grabbed her quill from the nightstand and opened a bottle of ink, dipping the former in the latter and placing the tip on the parchment.

Then it occurred to her she had absolutely no idea at all how to write in a diary.

"Er..."

Hi. I'm Ginny Weasley.

Then, as she thought about how to introduce herself to herself, she gasped, dropping the quill, the book, and herself to the carpet.

Her writing disappeared.

"Merlin's beard," she whispered to herself, crawling up to the diary and looking at it. Another gasp, she realized something else.

The diary was writing back.

Hello Ginny Weasley. My name is Tom Riddle.

A/n Gasp! I bet you thought I would never be so evil as to put Ginny through so much torture at the ripe old age of ten/eleven! But be not afraid, my dears, be not afraid, for I have the ace of hearts up my sleeve, I have a rabbit in my hat, I have a method to my madness.

By the way, my best friend for the last...oh...my whole life? has written a story (finally) on this site. It's a LOT different than this one, and deals with drug addiction, because that's just how we roll. The fact of the matter is this girl, Seda Ramon, lived next to me when I used to live in Chicago, and we have continued to be best friends since. We talk every night, exchange emails every day. She has so much influence on my life. She tells me all the music to listen to, I tell her all the books to read. More importantly though, she taught me how to write. She would not let me turn three until I could write, and she would not let me turn four until I could read. Yes, I did it backwards. She was only two years older than me, I don't think she realized quite what she was doing.

Anyway, her penname is Cause Without Effect and her story is called Kicking the Habit. If you like H/G, it's a getting there.

Disclaimer! In this world, they are few things I desire deepest in my heart. Of course, success, happiness, and health to my whole family, as well as peace and prosperity to the whole world, so I never have to be appalled when I watch the news. There's the desire to always know love. There's the desire for music to always be heard. And then, I desire ownership of Harry Potter. Alas, while I usually always have a song playing somewhere—whether really or in my mind—, and I have never for any moment felt unloved, and so far, my family's pretty happy, healthy, and successful, I just gotta work on those two. So, I don't own this.

A/n So I live in California, and on top of homework, schoolwork, band practice, hockey practice, hockey games, and getting several detentions a week for assorted (stupid) reasons, I have been avidly campaigning for not only Barack Obama but going to rallies and making phone calls about voting NO on Proposition 8. So, living in one of the top five reddest and most religious counties in California, I have, at No on 8 rallies, been spat at, pushed, shoved, screamed at, threatened, and several others things to provoke me, for all of which I can file lawsuits. Phone banking for Barack Obama, I have been screamed at, hung up on, and threatened some more. Yet all the while I stay as composed, polite, and respectful as I can manage. Worse than all that probably was calling up the woman and asking her for her son, then having her burst into tears and telling me that he had died two days previous in Iraq.

With all that on my back, I still have no excuse for not updating in so long. I am very sorry.

“Some say we're never meant to grow up. I'm sure they never knew enough.”

--Sum 41, “Some Say”

It was a miracle.

The Weasleys arrived at King's Cross Station on time, if not even early. They showed up with fifteen minutes to spare, and even with

that knowledge, they were in a rush to get through the barrier. Harry, Ron, and Hermione went first, with Bill and Charlie, then it was Percy and the twins. Finally, Ginny rolled herself through the barrier, her mother and father, grinning, going through in her wake.

Once through the barrier and onto the steamy platform, the twins met up with Lee before their sister even made it through, Neville managed to find Harry, Ron, and Hermione, and Luna and Ginny met with each other. Bill and Charlie lifted all the trunks onto the train.

Then, they waited.

Ginny, sitting in her chair in front of the train's entrance, took a deep breath, staring at it determinedly, like it was the last challenge she had to face in her life. The Weasleys and their gathered friends watched in anticipation; some bystanders had even stopped and stared, looking on the scene of the persistent girl overcoming her white whale.

She stood up.

She took a step.

She stepped up.

She was on the train.

XoXoX

Her mother had taken an excruciating amount of time to say goodbye; it almost made her miss the train.

Nonetheless, she managed to make it, and now, she was standing in front of the whole school, waiting to be Sorted. She was starting to get restless, but her brothers and her sister kept throwing looks over at her, mostly happy, proud, encouraging.

Luna had just gotten Sorted into Ravenclaw. They exchanged a small, sad smile and she sat down at the long table.

Weasley...she wished she could change her name to Ginny Aa. No, then she'd be first for everything...Maybe Bb.

This was taking agonizingly long. Every time McGonagall called a name and someone left the line, then another person joined the line from absolutely nowhere. She thought she would never, ever be Sorted and she'd have to sleep on the staircase and attend classes under the alias of the custodian named Julio.

Just as she was thinking of better, more feminine names to call herself besides Julio, she realized only two people were left on the stage. The other girl looked intense, like she might bite Ginny's head off if she made a sudden movement. They had a small little facial expression war, almost as if they were fighting to see whose last initials were closest to a.

"Tupper, Odila."

She now wondered who the hell looks at their child when they're born and says, "Hmm...I'm going to name you Odila, without a middle name, so you're forever forced to live with this dreadful address."

"SLYTHERIN!" the hat cried out.

Probably ambitious to change her name, Ginny thought to herself, shuffling her feet as she came to the realization that she was next to be Sorted. She had waited for this day since she had seen Charlie waving from the window of the Hogwarts Express. This was important to her.

"Weasley, Ginevra."

Yes, please feel the need to call my name, as someone with the last name of Umlaut might come crashing through the roof and demand to be Sorted.

Though, she kind of felt bad now for making fun of Odila's name when she remembered that her mother had looked at her and told the Healer, "Ginevra Molly," subjecting her to a prison of a name, where

she could only shorten it, not even being able to resort to a middle name without being “matching mother-daughter.”

With a quick look over at her siblings, all huddled together at the Gryffindor table, looking anxious and attentive, even Percy, whose face was half-turned toward the front, an odd position with his nose also pointing toward the starry sky on the ceiling of the Great Hall. The twins were grinning identically, almost as if they already knew what the hat was going to cry out. Ron looked like he was trying for the perfect ratio of care to not care, but the former was going too out of control for him to regulate. Harry was looking determinedly at her, catching her eye and nodding slightly, with a small, encouraging smile. Hermione was straight out beaming, her fingers crossed and her eyes glistening, proud as hell for her little sister, though her words would be different. She then spared a look at Luna, seated at the Ravenclaw table, actually looking like she was half-paying attention, Ginny took a deep breath and sat on the stool.

First of all, the hat was enormous, and slid nearly all the way down her face. Second, the hat was humming really loud in her ear.

“Hmm...Weasley...there are many of you, aren’t there? Ah, well, nevertheless, nevertheless...You’re brave, aren’t you? Brave to go through all that you have and still not lose faith.”

Faith? Ginny couldn’t help but repeat in her mind.

“Yes, faith. Faith in yourself, faith in your family, faith in their love for you, faith that good still exists and conquers. You’re loyal to your beliefs. And to those that you love, no doubt about that...”

Is this a psychoanalysis or a Sorting? Put me in a House already.

“To Sort you, I must psychoanalyze you, I must say. Bravery, loyalty. Like a true Weasley. Not even mentioning the potential in your mind. Unused, most of it...not good at all for Ravenclaw, oh no, to be genius and unaware...”

You do realize I will be aware of my genius if you tell me all about it?



“You’d be surprised, oh you would...You’re not ambitious, much, are you? Don’t know what the future holds, don’t think much of what you might be if the world goes your way, if fate allows you to follow your path...how strange. You have quite impressive possibilities in your future, and a generally determined disposition. Why do you let your fears rule you, your future?”

Ginny tensed, visibly. Her teeth clenched, her hands gripped the side of the stool so hard she was surprised it didn’t splinter. She was silent, even in her thoughts.

“Fine, then. Don’t bother with an answer. My decision is made, anyhow.”

Finally, Ginny sighed inwardly.

“GRYFFINDOR!” the hat bellowed, most likely deafening her for life.

“Merlin’s beard,” she mumbled, rubbing her ear, before standing up and giving the hat back to McGonagall, who smiled at her. She walked over to the Gryffindor table, to the hurried applause and cheers, as if quick happiness would make the food come faster.

But, as soon as she reached her seat, she was bombarded. Her brothers and sister all hugged her and cheered like it was their own Sorting they had just witnessed.

Fred elbowed her when the feast started. “You okay? You looked kinda... edgy up there.”

“Yeah,” she said, nodding. “I’m fine.”

“Because you know,” George said. “if you want us to, we can beat it up.”

She grinned. “I think I’ll manage.”

XoXoX

The twins' party this year was only rivaled by the party they threw to celebrate the House Cup they won and the one they threw the year before for the first years.

It was a shame Ginny missed it.

As soon as she walked in, she was bombarded by stares. People were whispering about her.

For Merlin's sake, she thought. It happened nearly a year ago. Get over it. Open the Prophet and read a headline. Find a new story to gossip about and just get over mine.

After a few minutes of intense paranoia, she told her siblings that she was tired from all the travel today and retired to bed. Of course, they all knew this was not the problem, but they accepted it with no issue, and Hermione told Ginny to take a Dreamless Sleeping Potion.

Well, Ginny had no intention of doing so.

Instead, immediately upon entering her dormitory, claiming her bed, and changing into her pyjamas, she pulled out her small, black diary.

She had no idea why she trusted him. She had no idea why she had continued to write to him, telling him all about her family, her childhood, and her abduction and its aftermath. She had no idea why she thought that there was no danger in this man, but she needed him. She needed him to tell her that it would all get better. She needed him to be there, and understand, and seem like just an outsider, in no way connected to her, who still knew in his heart that everything would turn out good. She knew that Tom would not lie to her, she knew that he would not tell her something that was not true.

Every day, she wrote to him. She told him everything, she had told him everything. Every day, he wrote back to her. Sometimes, he responded to her stories with stories from his own life. He had a sad life: orphaned, and alienated even at the orphanage for being "odd," when later he found out he was really magic. Other times, he responded to her writings with heartfelt, kind, reassuring answers that made her feel hope.

They were the same words. They were the same words her family had told her a hundred thousand million billion times, but coming from Tom, someone who wasn't related to her, who didn't necessarily want or need her to like them, who didn't even have to be nice to her, who didn't even have to comfort her or support her in any way, the words had a meaning. The words told her what they were really supposed to mean, they told her what all her family meant when they said the words to her.

I got Sorted into Gryffindor tonight. My brothers couldn't be happier.

She wrote it in the diary in her small, neat, slanted script. After a minute, the ink rearranged itself into Tom's response.

You see, Ginny? All the worry, and it was for naught.

Yeah, I guess. It's bothering me, though, Tom. They keep staring at me. All of them. I walk around the common room and people whisper. I walk down the corridor and eyes follow me. I even felt eyes on my neck when I was at the feast. Maybe I'm being paranoid. Maybe they're not staring at me?

Tom's response took a moment, and the words completely soaked into the paper and stayed blank for a while until the new words appeared on the page, letter by letter, like an invisible hand was writing them, just a little quicker than she read.

I don't know. Both situations are likely, Ginny. Maybe you are being paranoid, and no one is staring at you. You just fear they are, and the fear has caused paranoia. Then again, they could be staring at you. Your story is definitely one of interest; it is not something people will get over, especially when they have the chance to see you in person. They didn't forget Harry's story, did they? Even you said yourself, eyes still follow his movements.

Ginny sighed and rubbed her forehead right where her scar was before scribbling down her response.

Harry defeated an evil, delusional murderer at the age of one because his mother died to save him, and therefore saved hundreds, maybe thousands, of lives by ridding the world of such a horrible entity. I lived through two months of torture by two evil, delusional Muggles who abused my sister, technically their daughter. No death, and Hermione probably would have been safe anyhow. It's hardly the same.

Tom's response was immediate.

Voldemort was not delusional, nor evil. He simply had ambition. He was driven toward a goal, and some people have to do things others deem bad to get to an objective. Your Muggle captors were similar. They wanted something, and nothing would stop them. It's not ever a bad thing to have aspiration, Ginny. Do not assume that just because you might have to go to unthought-of lengths to reach this goal, doesn't mean you are a bad person or an evil person or a delusional person.

In fact, it means you are smart. It means you know what you have to do to get to what you want. It means you are truly an admirable person, because you don't care what you have to do to get what you want. That, Ginny, that is the most important thing of all. Keep that in mind.

Ginny sighed, furrowing her brow at these words. Tom had a tendency to see what she considered evil in a completely different way that almost made it sound harmless, and see what she considered good in a way that made it almost sound disgusting.

I'm going to bed. Goodnight, Tom.

Rest well, Ginny.

XoXoX

"How'd you sleep last night?" Hermione asked quietly the next morning. Ginny smiled.

“Fine. I haven’t been that bad the last few days, Hermione, you have to say it yourself.”

She furrowed her eyebrows and looked around for red hair. “I know, and to be honest it’s kind of scaring me. You didn’t look very good leaving your parents like that.”

“Your parents too.”

Hermione waved it away. “It’s not time for that now, Ginny. What I’m trying to say is that you should be emotionally unstable right now.”

“The care and consideration you feel for me is overwhelming.”

“Ginny!” Hermione whispered sharply. She looked around again and leaned toward her sister more. “Ever since we went to Diagon Alley you’ve been...fine. I mean the first night you were a bit edgy, but after that...you seem content with everything. What happened, Ginny? You mother asked you almost thirty times how you were, and one time usually sends you into a twenty minute rant, and yet you’re excellent. What’s going on with you?”

Taking a deep breath, Ginny smiled at her sister. “Hermione Jean Weasley, for that last...hell, it’s almost been a year. For the last year I have been torturing myself with this. I have been getting angry, getting sad, just killing myself over what happened to me and how it affected my family. I don’t want to kill myself anymore. I don’t want to have to deal with therapists anymore, I don’t want to have to deal with Healers anymore. I want it over, all of it. Hogwarts, I realized, is perfect. I can get over it now, Hermione, because I don’t have to wake up every morning and wonder if you’re still okay. I don’t have to wake up and get into a wheelchair and see my scar and realize that I’m still away from you and have to see my mother’s face and see the horror in her eyes when she realizes I had another nightmare. It’s wonderful for me, Hermione. This is a fresh start.”

“Fresh start?” Hermione said uncertainly.

"I got on the train, didn't I?" Ginny smirked. "I stepped onto the train, just like Capio said, just like I didn't ever think I could do. But I did it. And did I not get over the whole contact thing?"

"That took you three days," Hermione said, recalling the few days when Ginny was still in defense mode and refused physical contact with anyone. It caught them all off guard, as it was a few days after she had woken from her coma.

"But I did it. Hermione, please. I'm finally making progress. Don't question it."

XoXoX

They stared at me today, Tom. This time I know it. It wasn't paranoia, I wasn't hallucinating, it was real. People were staring, whispering, pointing...I spent all day smoothing my hair over my scar. I can't help it, Tom, it's scaring me.

She waited for Tom's answer, and luckily, it did not take long.

What people think should not be a concern of yours, Ginny. Either you will make connections, or you won't. It's as simple as that. Those who are interested will come. Those not, will not. People have opinions, Ginny, they have convictions. Once they have them, they are hard to change. If someone does not enjoy your presence, nothing you do will change that. If they do not like you, they are nothing to you.

Ginny's hand faltered over the book, her eyebrows furrowed. Don't you think that's a little extreme?

No, he wrote immediately, and Ginny shook her head before responding.

Your opinions are extreme in my eyes, I have to be honest with you.

He wrote back immediately. What have I told you? Opinions cannot be changed easily. And the more "extreme," the harder it is.

Have I ever told you that you scare me sometimes?

Tom let the words soak in completely, both figuratively and literally, before he wrote back.

Sometimes fear is the only way, Ginny. The Muggles that abducted you, they scared you. Still, nearly a year later, you fear things because of them. You fear blood. You fear being away from your family, you fear people being unsafe. They left their mark. They frightened you. Now, when you think of them, fear comes with it. Anger, fear, pain. You associate these with them. The most memorable things involve these feelings: anger, fear, pain. You will never forget them now. Even if you get over what they did to you, even if that water flows under the bridge, you will always associate them with anger, fear, and pain. You will always remember the anger, fear, and pain. Therefore, you will always remember them. Syllogism, they call it. You remember anger, fear, pain. They caused anger, fear, pain. Therefore, you remember them.

Ginny cut him off at that point, furiously scribbling underneath his words.

I get it. Okay? Please, just stop.

The words dripped into the parchment, and he did not write back for a moment.

Are you angry, Ginny?

She did not write immediately.

Yes.

Are you afraid, Ginny?

She hesitated even longer.

Yes.

You are remembering them, Ginny. You are remembering what they did to you, aren't you, Ginny? Things are flashing before your eyes. You're starting to feel pain again, pain they caused. Your legs...they're twitching, aren't they? To remind you? You can use them now, Ginny. You can throw down this diary, you can walk away. Walk away so you don't have to remember, walk away so you can pretend to get over it and act like everything is all right when in actuality nothing is all right. Nothing is back to normal, nothing is like you say it is. Why can't you face it, Ginny? Why can't you sit here and face your fears, and succumb to the memories just once? Tell me about them, Ginny. Tell me about the memories, and I can help you. What are your real fears? What is it really that is scaring you, what is it really that makes you angry? What is it really that makes you want to close this diary and walk away?

Ginny stared at Tom's words for a long while. She took a deep breath and looked at the bottle of ink next to her. She could tell him. Her real fears, her real concerns, what really angered her about the whole situation. Because in actuality, it was not the pain that she feared. It was not the pain that had angered her. It was not the fact that she realized what Harry and Hermione had gone through so long. It was not that she didn't understand or that she finally found out how bad people truly can be.

Her real problem? Her real cause for all the anger, all the fear?

There were more. There were more out there, there were more people willing to go to unheard of lengths to abuse their child. There were more people who had children whom they did not love. And people didn't know anything about it. They didn't know anything about it, and children were dying and getting seriously hurt and all people were focusing on was that she had gone through it and lived. What about those who didn't live? What about those who went through so much of it that they become unstable?

She was not afraid it would happen to her again, or that someone would do something to her family.

She was just afraid it would happen again. Because it was. All over the world.



It angered her. It angered her that people were getting hurt.

She dipped her quill into her ink bottle and started writing.

A/n All righty. There were very important things in that chapter. It may not seem like it, but there was. I'll try to update sooner, but then again, I said that last time. Thank you for sticking with me during these hectic times, and I hope all is well with you.

And all you Americans, get off your lazy asses and vote on Tuesday!  
The future of America depends on it! Every vote counts!

(See, the phone banking has been encouraging for me, too.)

Ja, mata!

A/n Well, I deeply apologize, but I have found it very hard to be interested in anything lately. Writing, reading, music, my friends, school...it's weird. I've been sleeping unnatural amounts, including during my classes, more than usual. My every morning is now spent trying to think of new ways to convince my parents to let me stay home from school. For inexplicable reasons, every little, tiny thing makes me furious, and I come home and hole myself in my room.

Then of course, once I started realizing I should probably write during that time, I wrote this whole chapter in a day. It was long, great, and I was really happy with it. Then, when I opened the file the next day, it was all gone. All I had was the disclaimer. I was so pissed off that I almost put a whole through my wall. Nonetheless, I apologize greatly for not having this chapter out to you sooner.

Nonetheless, I apologize greatly for not having this chapter out to you sooner.

"We're only just as happy as everyone else seems to think we are."

--Jimmy Eat World, "The World You Love"

"Hi, Madam Pomphrey. How was your week?"

"Quite fine, not as many stupid first years this time 'round."

"If that's a shot at my siblings, I commend you."

"Your siblings, actually, have not gotten injured yet this year. Almost a month in, I'm very proud of them."

"The biweekly check-ups have been rather annoying on both our parts, though, have they not? Maybe if we cut back... just on Fridays, you know the end of the week," Ginny proposed casually, pushing herself off the wheelchair and onto the bed. Madam Pomphrey smiled.

"If only, Miss Weasley, but I think neither of us wants to get on that side of your mother."

Ginny sighed. "I always tell people it's not just her children, but no one believes me."

Madam Pomphrey smiled. "How's it going? Any panic attacks, nightmares, newly determined fears?"

"No, no, all is well. I haven't had a nightmare since I got here," Ginny said, shrugging, lying. She had had nightmares. Just not any loud ones. "Just a few rudimentary tests then?"

"I imagine so, unless of course you haven't gained any weight, then I might have to give you a disgusting tasting potion that will make you lose more weight from vomiting."

"And so it goes," she sighed. "I've lost over a kilogram."

"It's every girl's dream to have your metabolism, Miss Weasley."

"Perhaps I should bottle and sell it, like one of those love potions in Diagon Alley."

"You'll be famous."

"So have I thoroughly distracted you?" Ginny asked, knowing that she hadn't; nothing distracted the Hogwarts matron. Madam Pomphrey smiled, shook her head, and turned around, reaching into the cabinet and giving Ginny a potion. Ginny immediately grimaced.

"Please? Please, Madam Pomphrey, I'll go eat a whole day's worth of food at dinner right now. Please, don't make me drink this."

"Do you want me to read the letter from your Healer again?"

"I really wish you wouldn't."

"I'm going to read it over and over again until you take the potion," she said, taking it out of her pocket. "Dear Madam Poppy Pomphrey, My name is Healer—"

Ginny downed the whole thing in less than a second. "There! Finished! Atrocious to the last drop! May I go now?"

"You may."

XoXoX

"I cannot believe how affable Madam Pomphrey gets when you're around," Hermione sighed.

They were all eating dinner, and Ginny was downing goblet after goblet of pop, her logic being anything to get the horrid taste out of her mind, but with the carbonation to avoid vomiting. Harry shook his head at her.

"One of these days you should actually follow the diet the Healers give you."

"Please, Harry, I've never weighed even close to the weight they want me to be. Even before all of this, I was still seven kilograms less than they want me to weigh right now. More than that, I think. It's impossible for me to gain weight."

"It really is, Harry," Hermione said. "You'd think she doesn't ever eat if you weren't familiar with Molly's habits."

"Speaking of Molly's habits," Harry said. "How are you adjusting?"

Ginny sighed, sat back, and thought a moment or so before answering the question. "I want to learn to paint."

"What does that have to do with anything?"

"People are always saying that painting is very expressive. That it helps them convey their emotions in a safe way. I want to learn to paint so that I no longer feel the surging need to scream at the top of my lungs when people ask me how I'm doing or how I'm adjusting or how I got my scar or any sort of thing like that; it's been only a month and already I've considered over twenty different approaches to my

fear that one day I won't be able to suppress the urge to scream my head off and will go insane in the Great Hall, these approaches including but not limited to several different art forms, physical exertion, —more unlikely due to this troublesome wheelchair— taking up dueling, taking up a life of crime, helping orphaned children, raising cattle, growing cantaloupe, collecting stamps, burning things, turning to punk rock music, learning Hungarian so I can mumble curse words in another language, mostly due to the fact that no one in their right mind would ever want to learn Hungarian so I would be completely safe from being translated, and most satisfying of all, moving to Luxembourg.”

“Luxembourg?”

“They seem so nice down there, the Luxembourgers.”

“You're a strange girl.”

“It's been six years, Harry, please tell me you knew before now,” Hermione said, and Ginny threw a green bean at her. “Hey! Eat all those, you need every single bit of food you can get in that tiny little body.”

XoXoX

“You're adjusted.”

Ginny set down her book, knowing from these two simple words that she would not get a single minute of studying in that particular day. No matter, she would just ask Tom later. She didn't like asking Tom about academics the way she sometimes did, but sometimes, he was exceedingly helpful, and lately, she had been cheating off him more than she had before.

“What?”

Hermione sat down across from Ginny and repeated herself. “You are adjusted. To everything. The bruises under your eyes are almost completely gone. You're smiling more. You're not letting people bother you like they used to. Your rants are shorter. You're eating.

The ridiculous checkups with Madam Pomphrey are like another class for you, not Healer's orders. What's going on; Ginny, this is not like you. I'm sorry to say it, but you're cynical, sarcastic, angry and all around bitter and frightened. People annoy you, questions annoy you, Healers annoy you, nightmares haunt you. How are you just so normal now? I don't understand, Ginny."

"You've never understood me," she mumbled, tracing an imaginary pattern on the table below her.

"I've always had a vague understanding of you, now you completely baffle me."

"You've never understood me," Ginny reiterated. "I'm unreadable, I'm unpredictable, I'm a mystery, I'm a maverick, I'm wild, I'm strange, unusual, weird. I'm not like other people. My mind doesn't work like theirs do. You've said that before, Hermione. All of those things have come out of your mouth, and then some. You've even said that you have never and will never understand me at all."

"Ginny—"

"Will anyone ever understand me, Hermione?" she interrupted.

Somewhere, in the back of her mind, she thought she knew the answer. The small black book always had the solution to everything. It could clear up any confusion. It knew exactly how to respond, exactly what to say, exactly what she was like. Sometimes it seemed like Tom could read into her very soul and pick out everything Ginny needed to know about herself. When she spoke to Tom, she never felt more understood, more accepted.

"What are you talking about?"

"Everyone in this school acts like I have dragon pox."

"That will pass once they get used to you, once they know you."

Ginny shook her head frantically. "No. No, it won't pass. It will intensify. Because once they get to know me, they will see I am

unreadable, unpredictable, a mystery, a maverick, wild, strange, unusual, weird, that I'm not like them, that I don't think like them. It will get worse."

"They will see that you are smart and nice and caring and compassionate and funny and talented and loyal and brave and see you for who you are."

"Who I am is a freak, Hermione."

Hermione's face matched displayed perfectly the emotions she felt. Her eyes were filled with tears, her mouth slightly open, her eyebrows twitching, like she knew exactly what to say, but words couldn't morph into that shape.

"Ginny, that is—"

"They were right, Hermione."

XoXoX

That's what I told her. I don't know why. I had no right to, I shouldn't have. But it just came out of me. What's wrong with me?

Nothing is wrong with you.

She's going to get the completely wrong idea, Tom.

Well, what did she say to you?

I left before she said a word.

Maybe that's for the best. Wait a while. She will come to you.

XoXoX

She hasn't come yet.

It's only been three days. Be patient, Ginny.

XoXoX

The dim light seemed to all be focused on the one solitary object as it penetrated her skin again and again. She cried out, feeling the pain like it was the only thing in the world that existed.

“Stop.”

She fell over, down to the floor, but the floor was no longer there, and she just kept falling, falling, until in her place stood a boy. The dim light seemed to all be focused on the one solitary object as it penetrated his skin again and again. She cried out, feeling the pain like it was the only thing in the world that existed.

“No!”

He fell over, down to the floor, but the floor was no longer there, and he just kept falling, falling, until in his place stood another boy. The dim light seemed to all be focused on the one solitary object as it penetrated his skin again and again. She cried out, feeling the pain like it was the only thing in the world that existed.

“Don’t fall!”

But he fell. He fell down, down to the floor, but the floor was no longer there, and he just kept falling, falling, until in his place stood another boy. The dim light seemed to all be focused on the one solitary object as it penetrated his skin again and again. She cried out, feeling the pain like it was the only thing in the world that existed.

“Stop it!”

It repeated with five other boys until the last fell down, down to the floor that had disappeared, and just kept falling, falling, until in his place stood a girl. The dim light seemed to all be focused on the one solitary object as she held it in her own hand, staring at the girl, who looked rather undaunted.

“Go ahead.”



“Don’t do it.”

“Go ahead!”

“No, don’t do it!”

“GO AHEAD! DO IT! Kill me! You heartless, soulless creature, you don’t even know what love is! You can’t even control yourself from hurting anyone! Giving you anything that can be used to injure someone is suicide! You’ll hurt whoever is near and not even know it!”

“You’re wrong.”

“GO AHEAD! KILL ME! Murder me. You don’t even know when something is wrong.”

“NO! NO, DON’T, STOP IT NOW!”

But she didn’t. The dim light seemed to all be focused on the solitary object as it penetrated her skin again and again. She cried out, feeling the pain like it was the only thing in the world that existed. She knew she had to stop. She knew this was too much, that she was hurting her. But she couldn’t stop. She couldn’t stop, no matter how much she wanted. It scared her. It scared her that she couldn’t stop. It scared that she had no control.

“This is what happens when you give a weapon to a monster.”

“Ginny!”

She sat straight up, gasping for air. Her roommates were all crowded around her bed, one was sitting next to her. She jerked away from them all, crawling into a ball in the corner of the bed, the most secluded one she could manage in the sort of space. They all gave her the most confused expressions they ever wore.

“You were screaming, Ginny. In your sleep,” Amanda, the girl next to her bed, piped.

“Sorry,” Ginny mumbled, lying back down, far away from them enough for comfort, but close enough that it wouldn’t look strange.

“Sorry? Why ever would you be sorry for a nightmare?”

The word made Ginny cringe. “I woke you all up. I’m sorry about that.”

“You shouldn’t be. We don’t mind.”

The two girls at the foot of the bed nodded vigorously.

“It sounded horrible,” the one at the end said. Ginny remembered her name was Holden.

“Do you want to talk?” asked Sarah.

“No,” Ginny said. “I have these all the time. Sorry I woke you up, though, really.”

The three girls mumbled a quick goodnight and left, sensing that Ginny did not want to go on at all.

XoXoX

Walking into Potions class that day, Ginny wondered what she had missed. Seeing as for the five weeks all they had been doing in that class was learning different theories of potion making, such as the properties of different ingredients and what would happen if you added too much of this to a mixture of this and that. Frankly, none of it interested Ginny, so she stopped paying attention a long time ago and just got the homework answers from Tom.

But that day, people were talking excitedly outside the class, and not even Snape’s cold voice or frighteningly perfect billowing robes could stop them from whispering to each other. Ginny wondered what Snape had said while she had been daydreaming the previous lesson.

“As most of you should know,” he said, turning to the class. “We will be applying a more practical side of this class to our learning. Today

we will learn to use our knives in the safest way possible. The board of governors requires me to do this, however I think knife skills are common sense rather than acquired knowledge, and I think it should not be my problem if you are too moronic to deal with sharp objects and consequentially amputate one of your own fingers.”

He dumped gnarled, fuzzy roots on the desks.

“You will chop these roots for the third years. Try to make it even, or else the whole potion will be ruined.”

All around her, people were taking their potion kits out and removing their silver knives to cut up the roots. Ginny stared at her potions kit on the table in front of her and gulped.

“Miss Weasley,” Snape said. “is there a problem?”

“No, sir,” Ginny mumbled, lying through her teeth. “No problem.”

“Then I would suggest you get out your knife and start the assignment.”

She did not.

Snape looked on the brink of livid. “Miss Weasley, take out your knife and start the assignment!”

Most of the class had now stopped with the chopping of the roots and were now focused on Ginny. When she still would not take out her knife as Snape demanded, he took it upon himself to take it out of her potions kit and give it to her, handle facing her.

Her eyes widened, her heart rate accelerated. The dim light seemed to all be focused on the solitary object. She couldn’t stand to think of what happen if she took hold of the handle and took the blade from Snape. There were other people in this classroom.

“You’ll hurt whoever is near and not even know it!”

Snape took Ginny's hand and roughly shoved the knife into her fingers. She dropped it immediately, jumping backward. Her legs quivered, as if to remind her that they were of use now. She was hyperventilating now; her heart rate increased drastically. Snape's face showed realization suddenly, but next to her, Colin Creevey laughed.

"Ginny, it's just a knife, calm down."

He picked the knife up by the top of the blade, giving it to her by the handle.

"Mr. Creevey, no!" Snape barked, reaching out to grab the knife from Colin.

But it was too late.

XoXoX

"What's going on, Hermione? What happened?"

"Potions class, Ron. Practical lessons. Knife skills. Her roommates said she had a nightmare last night."

"So what?"

"Lately, her nightmares aren't getting hurt, Ronald. It's not even other people getting hurt because of her anymore, either. It's...her. Hurting people."

"Oh."

"Hence the fainting because she was forced to use a knife."

They walked into the hospital wing to see Ginny trying to stand up from a bed, only to be forced down by Madam Pomphrey.

"I'm fine! Let me go!"

"Dear Madam Poppy Pomphrey, My name is Healer—"

“Oh you have not memorized that letter!”

“—Tracten, and I write to you concerning one Ginevra Weasley—”

“How many times must I tell you I’m fine before you let me stand?”

“—and her health. She is to remain under a strict diet that should—”

“Fine! I will stay for a few hours, but I will not stay overnight!”

“—show immediate results. This is more thoroughly explained in the attached letter.—”

“I’m not staying overnight!”

“—As well, she should have biweekly checkups with you each Monday and Friday to make sure she is staying healthy and has not sustained any injuries—”

“FINE!” Ginny barked, going limp. Madam Pomphrey beamed in victory and turned to the door, where Harry, Ron, and Hermione now all stood grinning. She nodded them in, and they made their way over to their sister, stifling laughs as Ginny shot them death glares worthy of her mother. “If I hear a word come out of any of your mouths, I swear I will go on a rant about whatever I want that will last over thirty minutes.”

“You can’t show us that and expect us not to ask any questions, Ginny,” Ron said. “You just had the matron recite a Healer’s letter to you to make you give up resisting and stay overnight in the hospital wing. You hate hospitals. You hate hospital wings. You hate Healers. What’s the deal?”

“I am so sick of hearing that letter that she insists on reading it over and over and over until I finally give in to whatever she wants. She’s ruthless, I think if they put her and our mother on opposite opinions in a debate some kind of wormhole would open up and swallow the whole world, but then spit us back up because it would be so tired of

her and Mum snipping at each other about whatever they're supposed to be snipping about."

"At least they stay on topic."

They all sat for a moment, before Hermione said, "Why didn't you tell us, Ginny? Why didn't you just tell us you were still afraid?"

Ginny looked at her hands. "I didn't tell you because I'm still afraid. It's something I've tried to put behind me. But I still think of it. All the time. I'm not proud of it. Not at all. I hate it about me, I hate it...I hate it in general."

They were silent for another moment. "How long do you have to stay in here, then?"

"Hopefully just overnight, but Madam Pomphrey has been known to push it."

Fred, George, and Percy walked through the door.

"Hey, kiddo, how you holding up?"

"Heard you collapsed."

"Did you at least shoot a witty comment at Snape beforehand?"

Ginny shook her head, smirking. "No, I was too busy hyperventilating. Next time."

Percy stood up tall. "There will be no next time."

Ginny grinned. "Yes, Percy. Of course."

"Do Mum and Dad know about this?" Ron asked nervously. Ginny nodded. "Why aren't they here?"

"Because I convinced Madam Pomphrey to not only let me write the letter, but to have her write the postscript to assure them of my good health," she said. Madam Pomphrey came back over toward the bed,

and Ginny called out, "Does this count as one of my checkups this week, seeing as technically, it is Friday?"

"You just don't want me to weigh you so you don't have to take that potion, because I can tell just by looking at you that you've lost weight."

"So the consensus?" Ginny asked hopefully. Madam Pomphrey sighed.

"Fine. But, you must not throw any sort of fit for the rest of the year, or I get to read the letter as much as I want, or give you extra potion, or make you stay overnight."

Ginny grinned widely.

XoXoX

"Miss Weasley, here is your dinner. Please eat it all, or else I think you—Miss Weasley!" Madam Pomphrey squealed dropping the tray of food and frantically searching around the room. The door to the loo was wide open; she wasn't in there.

But her bed was empty and mussed.

A/n Ah, so suspenseful! So, er...happy holidays to all? Personally I don't really have a denominational holiday, coming from a house full of atheists and agnostics, but we celebrate traditions, I guess. Whether you're like me or you celebrate Christmas, Hanukkah, Kwanzaa, or any other holiday that everyone always neglects, have the best one you can.

Again, sorry for the long wait. I'll try to hurry up this next one.

Ja mata.

Disclaimer! Eenie meanie miney moe, catch a tiger by the toe (which makes no sense if you think), if he hollers (if you catch him by the toe, he won't holler, he'll freaking eat you), make him pay fifty dollars every day (what kinda tiger has that money?), eenie meanie miney moe, and these characters and settings are not mine.

A/n Sorry it took so long for me to update, but you would not believe the last few months I've had. Most of this chapter is Introspective!Ginny, but next chapter will go back to Hermione and the brothers.

"Who knows if Clark Kent is a Superman, or if he's just an asshole..."  
--Bowling For Soup, "She's Got A Boyfriend Now"

"What do you mean she's gone?" Ron shouted.

"Mr. Weasley, remain calm here. I came out of my office and Ginny was gone. I brought you here to help me look for her. We should not panic right now."

"We shouldn't panic?! Our sister is missing!" Ron said. "The last time she went missing she almost died!"

"I would think we would know if there was a maniac on school property, Mr. Weasley, but I do appreciate the faith in Professor Dumbledore's security system."

"Ron, just calm down, okay?" Fred said. "We'll split up."

"Fred and I will search the hallways."

"Percy can use his prefect power to search more restricted areas."

"And Harry, Ron, and Hermione can search everywhere and anywhere else. We'll meet back here after our patrols."

"That's all and great, but if we don't find anything?" Harry said.



“Then we’ll switch patrols. You, Ron, and Hermione will search the halls, George and I will search around secret passageways we know, and Percy will search the grounds.”

“Okay, let’s go then,” Hermione said, pulling an arm of both Ron and Harry as they grumbled in protest.

XoXoX

It was three in the morning and they had switched patrols over ten times. Hermione had fallen asleep in a chair next to Ginny’s vacated bed two hours ago. Ron had fallen an hour later, and Harry not long after that. They were out of places to look, and they were terrified.

“You all show go back to your dormitories,” Madam Pomphrey said. “If she’s not back by tomorrow, then we’ll tell Professor McGonagall. For now, you really need to go back. Get as much sleep as you can.”

“No, I am not leaving here until she gets back,” Ron mumbled, his eyes drooping closed, his words slurring. “I’m not losing her. Not again...”

His snores filled the room after that.

XoXoX

They all awoke with a start when Madam Pomphrey started screaming.

“WHERE HAVE YOU BEEN?!”

Ginny stared up at Madam Pomphrey, confused; the intensity of this confusion increased at least tenfold, if not more, when a group of angry siblings crowded around her bed along with them.

They, too, however, were slightly confused. She did not appear to be injured or harmed in any way, shape or form. In no way did she seem shaken or troubled. Besides a symptom of being even paler than usual, she could have just woken up from a very long sleep.

So they immediately skipped over worry and went straight to ire.

“...Here?” Ginny said, sounding as if she weren’t entirely sure of it as she said it.

“You were not!” Madam Pomphrey told her. “You haven’t been here all night!”

Ginny’s face erupted into shock. “What?”

“We spent hours last night searching the castle and grounds! You weren’t anywhere!”

“I was sleeping, I swear! I don’t remember leaving, I don’t remember anything like that!”

“That’s impossible!” Hermione said. “You weren’t here, you weren’t in the castle, you weren’t on the grounds. We couldn’t find you anywhere.”

Ginny shook her head. “I don’t remember leaving. Or waking up at any part of the night.”

“You must have been sleepwalking,” Ron theorized.

“Sleepwalkers don’t play hide-and-go-seek, Ronald,” Hermione told him bitingly, glaring at him. “We’d have found her eventually if she were sleepwalking.”

“Well then what do you propose happened, Hermione?” George asked.

This comment sparked up small bickering matches between them all.

“Do you remember any dreams from last night?” Harry asked, stopping all the arguments. Everyone stared at him, but he was staring at the floor, not blinking and austere in expression and posture.

“Yeah,” Ginny said. “One. I was in like a dungeon. It was big, though, bigger than we have at Hogwarts.”

“What was happening in this dungeon?” Madam Pomphrey asked.

She was with a boy. Tom Riddle, in fact. He was dressed in Slytherin robes, he was talking to her, and he was telling her things about Hogwarts, things about the people there. They didn’t like her. No one liked her, besides her family.

“Nothing, really. I was trapped. I couldn’t get out.”

Everyone was silent, looks of pity on their face. Hermione, however, looked only curious—suspicious, really.

“That’s all it was?”

“Yeah,” Ginny said, staring only at Hermione. “Nothing really.”

XoXoX

Ginny was released from the hospital wing before dinner that night, only on the agreement that she would eat. However, she did not, and rushed straight to her dormitory for privacy, being sure not to be seen by her siblings. Immediately, she jumped into the bathroom with the diary (she didn’t like to call it hers, because it really wasn’t) and decided to tell him about her strange experience.

Tom, you’ll never believe what happened after I wrote to you last night. I fell asleep almost immediately, I barely even remember closing my eyes, but apparently, I got up and left. I wasn’t there all night, but I have no memory of leaving.

He didn’t answer immediately.

Sleepwalking is common, Ginny.

She narrowed her eyes at the book.

That's what Madam Pomphrey said. Harry asked me about dreams. I had a dream about you, you know.

What was it? He asked almost immediately. She explained the dream to him, every minutia of it, telling every word that was exchanged between them.

It was only a dream, Ginny.

She didn't like that answer. She shut the book and threw it to the floor. He said nothing! He said nothing that even implied he disagreed with the things the dream Tom said about her! That she was worthless, that she was nothing, that she was ugly and unlovable and a freak, that no one liked her.

Her legs were feeling weak. She needed to sit. She needed to relax.

So she walked back to her dormitory and shoved her diary under her pillow, sitting on the bed. Instantaneous relief washed over her.

My how she hated her life.

XoXoX

"My how I hate my life."

These were the first words out of Hermione's mouth when she found out Ginny had been released from the hospital wing and she now had to talk to her sister about the dream and the "sleepwalking." It was not exactly the thing she most wanted to discuss with her sister. While Ginny was a very, very wonderful person, and they had a very fantastic, very open relationship, Ginny was more stubborn than even a Weasley ought to be. She was a talented liar, a skilled improviser, and a very worthy adversary.

"When'd Madam Pomphrey let you out?" Hermione asked Ginny, and the younger girl shrugged.

"During dinner on the condition that I attended."

"I didn't see you there."

"I didn't go."

"Oh."

Ginny looked up at Hermione, her eyes filled with innocence and sincerity as the next words slipped out of her mouth. "The dream was just that, Hermione. A dream. I was stuck in a room I didn't recognize. There was water everywhere, and carvings of snakes on the walls. The air seemed foggy and...green. I was trying to get out, but I couldn't."

"Was anyone in there with you?"

She was thoughtful for a second, analyzing Hermione's eyes, and for a second, Hermione really thought she would answer somewhere along the lines of yes. Just as that thought zipped through her mind, Ginny's answer zipped through her ears.

"Not that I remember."

Hermione sighed and sat down on the bed. "I don't want to sound like your therapist, Gin. I'm not your therapist. But you can tell me anything, any time. If it's three in the morning and you really want to talk, wake me up. No matter what it is. If you want to tell me you hate me, just so long as you tell me. I'm afraid to not know things about you, Ginny. I'm afraid to make it happen again."

Ginny put her hand on Hermione's cheek, forced her face parallel to her own. "You will never lose me again. Not like that. We will have fights. I can't promise I won't disappear for a while or get in trouble, because we both know I will. I can't even promise I won't run away. Things get tough, things get hard. Hell, I might die before you. I might die tomorrow. That's not in my control. But you will never lose me again. If I disappear, if no one has a clue as to where I am, or even if you know where I am but you can't get there, I will always be with you. If they kill me, I will always be with you. I'll never disappear for good."

"Ginny?"

“Yeah?”

“That speech, while very heartfelt, made absolutely no sense.”

Ginny stared straight into her sister’s eyes, never wavering.

“I hope it never has to make sense, Hermione.”

XoXoX

Harry reached out his arm when Hermione came into the common room, a pillow in his hand. She snatched it from his grasp, pressed it against her face, and released a piercing shriek into it. Though it was a muffled sound, several people jumped and looked over at her.

“I hate your sister sometimes.”

“Don’t blame me, I’m just the foster kid,” Harry said, flipping through his book, not even looking up from the text. “Though I must say I do love how she suddenly becomes our sister whenever you hate her.”

“She’s so cryptic!” Hermione cried, sinking into her seat on the couch before launching into the long story of her and Ginny’s conversation.

“It’s Ginny,” Ron snorted. “What the hell do you expect?”

They sat in silence for a while, sans Ron scratching away at his essay. “What’s tomorrow’s date?”

“Um, September 30th, I believe,” Harry told Ron, flipping to another page in his book.

“Merlin’s beard!” Hermione said, standing up. Ron and Harry looked at her, confused, and stood up along with her.

“What’s wrong?”

“September 30th, you two. What happened September 30th?”

They were silent for a moment, and then Ron's jaw dropped to the floor, and he looked at Hermione with haunted eyes.

"Shit."

XoXoX

Ginny couldn't sleep that night. She kept looking over at the clock, waiting for it to strike one. While she did not know the exact time it happened, she knew her father had come home at about three that morning, and since she had followed the moon and stars that night, she approximated the time to being around one o' clock or one-thirty.

Her roommates had fallen hours ago. Her legs pained her in a cruel, cruel placebo effect. She knew nothing was going to hurt her. She knew it. But her legs pained her. Her scar throbbed, and an unbearable fatigue stripped her of all ability to move—this fatigue eventually morphed into agitation when anxiety and paranoia barred her from closing her eyes.

She kept reliving it. The stars. The fence. The shadows. The sound of kicking dirt.

Twelve fifty-three.

A few hours ago Hermione had come in to check on her. And once every hour until about midnight, when she suddenly stopped. She pretended to sleep. She didn't want to talk about it. Already, she had devised at least five excuses that she could tell Madam Pomphrey to get her out of classes. Meanwhile, her words with Tom floated through her head.

Twelve fifty-four.

It was only a dream, Ginny? What kind of reassurance was that? Tom didn't even give any hint that the words were false, or even that he would never say anything like that. He didn't even lie. Wasn't that what her mother always said? Lying is wrong, unless it saves someone from a particularly painful experience? He didn't even

pretend to disagreed with dream Tom's words. Didn't friends usually do that?

She was worried. This was the man who had said Voldemort was not evil. He had defended Voldemort's actions. What kind of person did that? Who defended a man who had killed thousands of people without mercy? Who defended a man who believed that the more magic history in your blood, the better witch or wizard—no, the better person you were? Who defended a man who said all that and was barely even a person himself?

Twelve fifty-five.

She loved talking to Tom, really. He saved her. When she was ready to give everything up, to run away and never come back, he set her straight. When she wanted to yell, scream, and punch things, he gave her a different perspective. When she wanted to announce from the rooftops that everyone should get a life and stop caring so much about hers, he told her that no one was trying to upset her. When she said that didn't fucking matter, he explained to her why it did.

He did this in a way that no one else could—detached. Tom was not at Hogwarts. He could not see Hogwarts as it was now. He didn't know what went on in the halls, he did not know how people acted. He knew nothing about her farther than what she told him. Better than all, he wasn't at all related to her, and his words were not hollow and sugar coated with I love you's and necessity.

Twelve fifty-six.

Now that she was thinking about it from this critic's eye, though, she found it could appear as rather...sketchy. Not really sketchy, even. More than that. In fact, it was borderline dodgy that this book could communicate with her. It absorbed ink and formed it back into words that perfectly responded to the words she had written in it. She was aware that this was the Wizarding world, and strange things happened in the Wizarding world, but that was strange. Seriously. She had read about a thousand odd Wizarding world experiences. But an old diary from 1942 that could write back to her claiming to be the owner?



Maybe someone had trapped Tom in there. She hadn't ever heard of any incident in which a man lived in a book. And she had never asked him about it. Or thought about it, for that matter.

Twelve fifty-seven.

Should she tell someone? Hermione, maybe? She was very curious about her, how she was doing, how she was so much better. Just a few simple sentences of explanation could be an answer to all of Hermione's worries, concerns, and questions. A simple answer.

Followed by a thousand questions.

The thought had broken into her skull and set off the Intruder Charms in her brain. She couldn't tell her without having to answer a thousand questions about Tom. Maybe Hermione would want to take him away from her. No. No. She needed Tom. So what? So she couldn't remember ever leaving the hospital wing right after talking to him. There was no proof that the events were in any way, shape or form connected. Her dream really could have been that: a dream.

You're starting to sound like him.

Twelve fifty-eight.

So she couldn't tell Hermione. How would she explain her behavior, then? She had to start getting bad—after all, the anniversary was two minutes away. Everyone would expect her to get bad. What did they want her to do? As it was she could barely make it through Potions without having a bloody panic attack. She couldn't see blood without...having a bloody panic attack. One day a week she had to go around in her goddamn wheelchair.

Tom knew. He knew she didn't like it. He knew she didn't want it. He also knew not to keep bringing it up; he knew not to pity her. He knew exactly what to say to her at any given time.

At least she thought he did.

Twelve fifty-nine.

Why was it bothering her so much? That Tom had erred? Humans have flaws. He was only human, wasn't he?

Wasn't he?

No. He wasn't. Tom Riddle...he was a diary. Ginny was talking to a book. Granted, it was a book that somehow had the ability to write back when she wrote in it and hold conversation with her, but still, it was nothing but a book. A book could do nothing. How could a book harm her? Tom Riddle was not human.

And books have flaws. In truth, generally they are not flaws of the book, but flaws of those who care for the book, but nonetheless: flaws.

There it was:

One.

She closed her eyes and let it sink in. One. One o'clock. One year ago at that hour, she had left her bed. She had taken the first step toward death. And why? Because of a letter.

When it all came down to it, they had trapped her. They had tricked her. She had put their whole plan into place. She had walked out that door. She had put herself in danger. She had jumped off the fence into the unprotected dirt road. She had caused everything that happened. She had put herself in a wheelchair. In a hospital. In mortal peril.

Because of a letter.

Ginny pushed her clock over so the face was on the table. She grabbed Tom's diary and stood up. Almost instantaneously, she collapsed to the floor.

"Fuck," she mumbled, using one of the posts of her bed to lift herself up to get to her stupid chair.

XoXoX

"Gin?" Ron mumbled when he saw his sister sitting in her wheelchair in the Gryffindor common room. "What's up?"

"I couldn't sleep."

"I don't think any of us could."

She snorted. "Great, so you lot remember as well."

Ron sighed, walked over to the couch next to where Ginny was staring blankly into the fire, and sat down. "I don't know how we could have ever forgotten."

"It was a big day," Ginny conceded. Ron stared at her in disbelief.

"The way you say that you act like it was some important birthday, Gin."

"I was abducted, Ron," Ginny told him. "I was abducted, there's nothing you could have possibly done to stop it."

"There must have been something."

"Oh, for Merlin's sake, I did it!" Ginny cried. "I'm the one who left the fucking house, I'm the one who sat on the fence for half an hour before jumping into a dirt road and not thinking twice when I saw a giant shadow and heard noises I didn't recognize. It's my fault. Ron, it's my fault."

"You didn't do this."

"Yeah, I did. Because if I hadn't? If I hadn't walked out that door in the middle of the night just so I could see the stars? Had I not done that none of this would have happened. Hell, if I could have settled for the roof none of this would have happened. This whole thing was all put into place by my stupid actions, and I refuse to let anyone think differently. Tell Hermione, tell Harry, tell Fred and George and Percy

and Bill and Charlie and please, for God's sake, tell Mum and Dad. Tell them it's my fault and that they did nothing. Nothing."

Ron nodded, saying not a word. "Should I take you to Madam Pomphrey in the morning? So you don't have to go to class?"

"No," Ginny said, staring at the fire, the light of the flames reflecting off her chocolate eyes menacingly. "I'm going to class tomorrow. If I don't start to get the hell over it now, I never will."

"Gin—"

"I need to get over it, Ron. I need to get over it."

He nodded again. "Can I do something we don't normally do?"

"Well after this earnest talk if we don't hug I think the sincerity will just be ruined."

So he did; Ronald Weasley stood up from his seat on the couch, leaned down and forward, and wrapped his arms around his sister, embracing her while trying to nonverbally tell her that everything would turn out fine, and that she would always, always, have her closest-in-age brother supporting her.

A/n Was it worth the wait? Yeah, didn't think so. But hey, on the bright side, you didn't have to wait a whole fourth of a year. I still have a whole week to spare on that one!

The subject of the anniversary will probably take up this whole next chapter, more from the family's points of view, but the chapter after that, we will get a visit from the possession fairy as he takes sweet revenge on a certain cat we are all painfully familiar with.

Sorry again.

Ja, mata.

Disclaimer! Hark! What is that I see over yonder? Is it, by wild chance, the creator of the world about which this story is written? What is this? It's not the person writing this story? Blasphemy! Or, is it truth?

A/n Okay, so, I lied. This chapter isn't reactions. I actually had a fantastic idea arrive to me. Fantastic in the way that it actually fleshes out into a plotline. So, I skipped the family's reactions and went onward to something that I could actually write.

"When the last living thing has died on account of us, how poetical would it be if Earth could say, a voice floating up perhaps from the floor of the Grand Canyon, 'It is done. People did not like it here.'"  
--Timequake by Kurt Vonnegut, Jr.

30 September. They captured me.

1 October. I awoke to find myself in a strange place.

2 October. They visited me and first beat me.

3 October. I began to tally dates on the wall. Blood was my ink.

Ginny had taken to fleshing out her obsession by making day-by-day accounts of her captivity. Not all her dates were right, but the premise seemed to calm her in a surprising way.

XoXoX

10 October. First time asphyxiation torture.

"I'm scared about Ginny," Hermione said, leaning toward her brothers at dinner—which Ginny had not attended the whole week. "She hasn't been eating, and she's looking a little pale these days. And I know she hasn't been sleeping."

"Not to mention those sick journals she's been keeping," George noted. They had discovered their sister's habit soon after it started, and while they said nothing to her, they found it revolting.

"Well what are we gonna do?" Harry said vehemently. "The girl was abducted. It isn't something you get over. We can't expect her to."

“We’re not saying she should get over it,” Hermione said. “We’re saying she should eat. She should sleep. When you and I were in the worst of the Sir and Ma’am Chronicles, everyone made sure we ate and slept and felt safe and comfortable and welcome. We just need to give her the same support.”

“It’s not the same, Hermione.”

She was hesitant in her response. “I know.”

XoXoX

11 October. Left me alone. Tried to sleep. Didn’t work.

Colin Creevey had always thought he was normal. He thought he was just a normal boy, living a normal life, with a normal family—his father was a milkman for heaven’s sake. His mother was a postwoman. Sundays they were have family time. It was the day to rest, when nothing new happened. When they were just a regular old English family, watching the news, drinking tea, spending time together. Sunday was their day to be normal.

Except it was a Sunday when the letter came.

There wasn’t supposed to be post on Sundays, but that Sunday, there was post. Life-changing post. It was on a Sunday when Colin Creevey found out he was anything but normal.

It was a Sunday that was the sheer greatest day of his life.

So every Sunday, like today, Colin Creevey would celebrate the anniversary of the greatest day of his life. He would make sure all his homework was done Saturday. He would sleep in. He’d have a big breakfast. He’d go for a walk outside, hang out by the lake. He’d spend some time with his friends. He’d watch or even sometimes join the persistent first years learning to fly.

Lately, though, he had taken to spending time with his new friend Ginny Weasley. He felt terrible for what he had done to her in the

Potions class, and while she seemed indifferent about his involvement, he spent time with her to make up for it. She was always so lonely all the time, either with her family or with Loony Lovegood. She needed a friend in her year, and her house, Colin had decided. Therefore, he tried to befriend her.

Since her Healers and physical therapist had determined that she was not in a position to be flying, he sat with her by the Quidditch pitch that particular October Sunday. They were silent, not talking or joking like they usually did. She was never in the mood when everyone around her was flying. As well, that particular Sunday she had apparently her deemed "wheelchair" day for the week. Whenever she was in her wheelchair, she was not...pleasant.

"My brothers used to always make me sit back. Watch them play. For years I just threw apples at them and chased around the ones they didn't catch. Then around six I started breaking into their shed and stealing their brooms. Riding them in turn. To this day they have never seen me fly."

Colin turned to her, and the look on her face, the gloss of her eye, told him exactly what her next sentence would be if she kept talking. "They will, Ginny."

They were silent for a long time, and then Colin heard the wheels on Ginny's chair being unlocked. He watched as she rolled away on the grass, his eyebrows furled together, and he stood to watch her.

She disappeared out of sight after a few seconds, and Colin held up a hand to shield his eyes against the bright late-morning sun.

"Ginny?" he called, before seeing something dart across his line of vision, only to fall to the ground seconds later.

"Ow, fuck!" a girl's voice screamed.

"Ginny!" Colin cried, running toward Ginny, trying to help her off the ground, but she already was. She clambered onto the broomstick, kicked off, and went for a while longer before collapsing again. It was not even that she could not fly the broom properly; she, personally,

was collapsing, falling off the broom, causing it to come down with her.

“What are you doing?” he asked her.

“Isn’t obvious? I’m trying to stay stable long enough to fly this bloody thing.”

“Ginny, this is ridiculous.”

“Of course it is! I should be able to ride this stupid thing. I’ve gone and bollocksed it all though, getting myself paralyzed like that.”

“Have you gone mad? What are you talking about?”

“Help me on here, yeah?”

“Ginny, your Healers said this wasn’t good. Your physical therapist said it wasn’t good.”

“They don’t know anything about me. They don’t know what I’m ready for and what I’m not ready for. And I’m saying I’m ready to get on this broom and fly. So either you can help me or you can go back into the castle and enjoy your Sunday.”

XoXoX

“Harry! Ron, Hermione! I need to talk to you about something.”

“What’s going on, Colin?” Harry asked.

“Ginny’s mad.”

“What?”

“She’s started flying. We were out by the Quidditch pitch and she just went into the broom shed, took a broom and started flying around. Except she can’t keep herself stable, and she keeps falling off the broom.”



"Oh my God!" Hermione gasped. "Harry, Ron, she could really hurt herself."

"Where is she, Colin?" Ron asked.

"The pitch. She won't quit."

"Oh, yes she will," Hermione raged, putting down her book and stomping out of the Gryffindor common room.

XoXoX

"Ginevra Molly Weasley, what in Merlin's name are you doing?" Hermione screamed at her sister when she reached the pitch.

"Flying," Ginny said, lying on the ground next to her broom, trying to hold herself standing long enough to mount it. "Or trying to, at least."

"Your Healers and Capiro said you weren't ready for this yet, Ginny. Don't push yourself."

"I think I'm the one to judge what I'm ready for, Hermione! Now please, leave me alone so I can practice in peace," she said, finally succeeding in mounting her broom. When she kicked off, she managed to fly about ten feet in the air, stabilize herself at about seven, and then fell. "Damn it!"

"Ginny!" Hermione growled, walking over to her sister and reaching out a hand to help her up. "Stop this, please."

"No! I won't stop until I can stay in the fucking air!"

"This is ridiculous, Ginny!"

"This is not ridiculous, Hermione!" Ginny said, giving up trying to mount the broom, and instead using it as a walking stick to hobble over to Hermione. She was too weak that particular day to be exerting herself in such a way. "This is something I never thought I'd have the ability to do again! This is something that I love and because of me being stupid, I have four Healers and a physical therapist

saying I can't do it! I want to. I want to prove to those bastards that I can. Please, Hermione. Please just let me have this one stupid, insignificant little thing because if it's been a whole year and things still aren't getting back to normal I'm going to explode."

"I'm not going to sit back and watch you hurt yourself like this."

Ginny was now face to face with Hermione, gripping the broom in an effort to hold herself up. "Then go back to the common room, read your book, and pretend like Colin never told you what happened. Pretend you have no idea what is going on. Because I am not going to stop. I don't care if I break every bone in my body again. I don't care if I hurt my spine again. I don't care if I lose my ability to walk again. I need to do this, Hermione. I need to be able to ride a fucking broom."

XoXoX

"Why can't she fly?" Ron asked. "I mean, shouldn't it be easy for her?"

"No. A lot of flying a broom comes from using your legs. You need them to steer, accelerate, but mostly keeping your balance. She still doesn't have complete control over her legs, especially in the area of keeping balanced," Harry explained. "It's not that she can't fly it. It's that she can't stay on long enough to do so."

"I feel so bad for her," George said.

"She can't even do what she loves," Fred finished.

"If I couldn't play Quidditch—"

"I'd be crushed."

"I'm going to try and bring her in for lunch," Hermione said. "If she hasn't already killed herself."

XoXoX

12 October. Another visit. Hit my head and blacked out. Awoke soaked in blood.

“Ah, Jesus Christ, sitting is good,” Ginny gasped, collapsing on the bench, her head falling onto her empty breakfast plate.

“Eat, Ginny,” Hermione chastised. She lifted her head up, and immediately Hermione began loading her plate with food.

“I won’t be able to eat all this, Hermione. After all, I am human.”

“You’re a Weasley, Weasleys are excellent eaters.”

“Yeah, the boys are. I’m Ginny. The thirty-three kilogram wonder. Remember me?”

“Yes, I do. And I’d like to bump you up over forty-five kilograms.”

They were all startled when Harry started chortling. “Sorry,” he said. “Just the thought of Ginny gaining weight seems laughable.”

“Shut up,” Ginny mumbled. She took her fork and began to push her food helplessly around her plate.

“Ginny, generally eating requires placing food in your mouth, chewing it, and swallowing.”

“Generally eating also requires a sense of hunger,” Ginny retorted. She continued to push her food around, before shoving a few raspberries in her mouth, purposefully getting a bit of juice on her lip in order to get a napkin, wipe off her mouth, and surreptitiously spit the berries back into her napkin at the same time. With that done, she just continued to push food around her plate, every once in a great while making motions of eating when nothing was really on her fork or reaching for more food while really depositing the food from her plate onto the communal platters.

Eventually, Hermione, Ron, and Harry all disappeared from the table, and Ginny was able get away with having eaten absolutely nothing for breakfast that morning.

XoXoX

13 October. First time fire torture.

"Where were you last night, Gin?" Hermione asked, sitting down across from her sister.

"Madam Pomphrey kept me overnight," she said.

"Why?" Ron asked.

"I lost weight again and showed obvious signs of exhaustion. She wouldn't let me leave."

"Eat," Harry said.

"What, do you take turns or something?" Ginny snapped. "Tomorrow Ron will be pestering me to eat? Look, I already ate before you came here, see?"

She gestured to her plate, which had tiny pieces of scrambled egg on it, along with several other traces of food.

"So I'm just going to get going to class now."

"We'll see you at lunch," Harry said pointedly. Ginny either did not hear or pretended not to, because she just continued to walk out the Great Hall.

They did not see her at lunch.

Nor at dinner.

She was nowhere to be found that night.

XoXoX

14 October. They broke my clock. Still kept dates, just inaccurately.

“Okay, now what happened to you last night?” Harry asked.

Ginny looked at him, genuinely confused. “I was sleeping.”

“You were not sleeping. Hermione checked on you a thousand times. You were never in your bed.”

Her face darkened, but just a second later she responded. “I wasn’t sleeping in my bed. I snuck up to the Astronomy Tower and stared at the stars. Fell asleep and awoke with the sun this morning.”

Hermione’s eye narrowed at this—she did not believe a word of the story. However, she did not challenge her sister’s words. In fact, she had no time to, as Ginny then proceeded to stand abruptly, mechanically. When she spoke, her voice was just as mechanical, fake, detached, proper—not at all like Ginny Weasley’s voice.

Her words were: “I have forgo—”

She did not even finish her sentence before leaving, turning on heel and walking out the Great Hall.

“Okay?” Ron said. “What did I miss besides the end of that sentence?”

Hermione glared at the doors that Ginny had exited out of. “If she’s not at lunch I’m going to take desperate measures. And I mean really desperate.”

Well Ginny Weasley was not at lunch that day.

Hermione’s desperate measures consisted of approaching those she knew Ginny spent her time with. Namely, Miss Luna Lovegood.

“Ginny? I haven’t seen her all day.”

“Don’t you have Charms with her in the morning?”

“Yes. She was not in class.”

“Weren’t you concerned what happened to her?”

Luna shrugged. “I figured she had an encounter with a Wrackspurt. Common side effects are forgetfulness and apathy.”

“Thank you, Luna. You simply have no idea how much you have helped.”

Luna hummed in contentment.

XoXoX

15 October. They wouldn’t stop telling me I’m worthless. Nothing. I think they’re right.

“Where the hell were you yesterday?” Hermione barked at Ginny when she saw her sitting calmly in the Gryffindor common room that morning.

“What?”

“First you leave breakfast without even finishing your sentence, then Luna tells me you didn’t go to your classes, then your professors tell me you never showed up, and you’re not at dinner, and Holden and Sarah say you never came into your dormitory last night! You are going to tell me where you were yesterday, Ginevra, right now!”

Ginny’s mouth moved uselessly for a while before her face lit up and she said, with a strange sense of pride in her voice, “Hiding.”

“Why didn’t you go to class?”

“I didn’t want to.”

“Why didn’t you go to meals?”

“I wasn’t hungry.”

“Why did you just leave breakfast like that?”

“You kept asking me questions. And you were going to ask more.”

“Well usually you’re such a good liar, and yesterday it was like you didn’t even know what had happened to you.”

“I must have been sleepwalking again. I don’t remember not being in bed.”

“Have you eaten yet?” Hermione asked.

“Isn’t it Ron’s turn today?”

“Yeah, I just figured he’d probably forget.”

She smiled. “I ate earlier. I couldn’t sleep last night, ate breakfast as early as I could.”

Hermione sincerely doubted this, but did not dispute it.

XoXoX

17 October. Third time asphyxiation torture.

Amanda Hold had always thought she was a normal girl. Her father was an executive for one of those companies where nobody had any clue whatsoever as to what they did. Her mother was an ordinary housewife. She had a brother two years younger than her who liked to annoy her and her friends at every possibility. They fought all the time, and her mother was always fed up. Amanda had a normal amount of friends. She got normal grades—not excellent, not horrible. She had normal teachers. She went to a normal school, with normal classmates. She never got in much trouble. She did her homework. She maintained a normal social life. She was of normal attractiveness. She was of normal maturity. She had normal eleven-year-old girl features.

So it came as a surprise when she received a letter saying that she was anything but normal.

Her father was confused, then proud. Her mother was proud, then weepy upon discovering she had to send her baby girl away. Her brother took it as a chance to deem her a freak. She simply found it strange.

She was normal her whole life. Never had even a leak of magic occurred, that she knew of. She had never made anything happen that she couldn't explain. She never made anything appear that she wanted.

When she came to Hogwarts, found out about the Wizarding world, she remained interested, while still denying that she belonged there. In her classes, she remained the same—not excellent, not horrible. She quickly made friends, maintained a normal social life. She did her homework. She never got in trouble. Really, she had achieved the level of normalness she had been at in her previous world, while still being anything but normal.

There were many things that were not at all normal. Namely, her roommate—Ginevra Weasley. She had heard her story on the train, and immediately, Amanda felt nothing but sorrow toward the girl. Slowly, a bit of admiration began to seep in with the pity.

Pity began to overtake again when the nightmares struck at night. And then, as October began, and she was informed by her other roommates, Holden and Sarah, that the anniversary of Ginny's captivity came, Ginny began disappearing, not showing up to class, not coming to bed at night. This along with her rapidly degrading health made Amanda began to feel horror. Horror that any person had to go through such a thing, let alone a young girl.

"I'm sorry," Ginny would always tell them when she had a nightmare that woke them up.

"You have nothing to be sorry about," Amanda would immediately assure her.

Ginny would never look assured.



Sometimes, when Amanda would walk into her dormitory, Ginny would be sitting on the bed, writing in a small black journal. Once she sensed Amanda watching her, though, she would stop immediately. A few times she had woken up for this same thing to happen. Ginny seemed attached to the small black diary.

Amanda wanted very much to help Ginny. Since the beginning of October, and the anniversary, Ginny had seemed hopeless. She wasn't sleeping, or eating, she wasn't coming to class some days, and she was spending more time in her wheelchair. She was paler than usual.

It was getting worse and worse.

But it was not until the last day of October—Hallowe'en—that it became terrible. That day, pale, jumpy, skinny, tired Ginny Weasley disappeared the whole day. When Amanda finally did see her, it was after, when everyone was in the common room, chatting and gossiping about it. And pale, jumpy, skinny, tired Ginny Weasley, after hearing the story, broke down. She collapsed into a chair, her hand clasped over her X-shaped scar, gasping for breath, and then, finally, dashed upstairs into her dormitory.

Amanda allowed Ginny's sister, Hermione, quite a long time up there with Ginny before she finally retired to bed around one in the morning. Hermione was sleeping on Ginny's bed, and Ginny was trying to rip a page out of her small black diary with little triumph. All Amanda could think was how weak she must be that she couldn't even rip a page out of a book.

When Ginny felt Amanda's eyes on her, she retracted her legs toward her chest hastily, ending the diary flying forward off the bed and landing, open, on the ground at the foot of the bed. Amanda leaned over, picked it up, and tossed it back to Ginny, who shoved it under her pillow frenziedly.

But Amanda had not thrown the diary back without first getting a good look at the pages.

They were completely blank.

Not a word was written in the diary.

It was then Amanda Hold realized something was terribly wrong.

A/n Say Amanda Hold out loud. Get it?

Anyway, sorry this chapter sucked so badly. I wanted to show that not just the Weasleys were noticing the change in Ginny.

And I'm kinda on a roll, so I'm going to see how many other things I can scratch off my to-do list, but I'll try to have another chapter up soon.

Disclaimer! [Insert clever disclaimer here]

A/n You have no idea how much I wanted to make Mrs. Norris bite the dust.

“A poor woman strangled in her very own bed as she read, but that's okay, because she was old and would have died anyway. Don't blame the sweet and tender hooligan, because he'll never never do it again, not until the next time.”

--The Smiths, “Sweet and Tender Hooligan”

31 October. Over a month in captivity. They celebrated—their way.

Harry trudged around the school, kicking at the ground. He couldn't bear to go into the Great Hall right now. He couldn't bear to see everyone laughing and playing and eating and being so happy. Not today. Not on the anniversary of his parent's death.

He had refused to go to Nearly Headless Nick's Deathday Party in order to mourn his parents. Ron and Hermione weren't with him. None of his family was. They hated when he did this. But he hadn't been allowed a chance to mourn his parents. The Dursleys told him they just didn't love him. But they loved him so much they died for him.

That couldn't go ignored.

All he asked for was one day a year. One day a year where he could mourn what had happened to his parents. He didn't think it was too much to ask for. Apparently, everyone disagreed with him, because on Hallowe'en, they were always trying to make him feel better.

Instead, he sulked through the halls, skipping the feast, ignoring the celebration.

It took no time at all for Hermione and Ron to find him. They said nothing to him. Instead, they just began to follow him as he sulked around the halls—they did so silently.

Rip...tear...kill...

Harry stopped in his tracks when he heard the voice. Ron and Hermione stopped with him.

“Harry? What’s wrong?”

He looked at them as if they were crazy. “‘What’s wrong?’ Didn’t you hear that? Didn’t you just hear that voice and now you’re asking me what’s wrong?”

“What—I don’t know what you’re talking about,” Ron said.

...so hungry...for so long...

“Harry, what’s going on?” Hermione said, but Harry kept walking, without saying a word, his head tilted oddly, as if trying to hear something distant. “You’re scaring me, Harry.”

...kill...time to kill...

That was it—Harry started running. He ran, ran, ran down the hall, but the voice followed him.

I smell blood...I SMELL BLOOD!...

Harry only stopped when he slipped on a puddle of water and fell to the floor. Panicked, gasping for breath, he stood, and looked forward at the wall, hearing Hermione and Ron’s footsteps nearing, his eyes widening with terror at the words on the wall.

THE CHAMBER OF SECRETS HAS BEEN OPENED

ENEMIES OF THE HEIR, BEWARE.

“Oh my goodness,” Hermione gasped, but Ron’s eyes were not focused on the words.

“Harry, we need to get out of here,” he said, and pointed to something hanging from a torch bracket on the wall. “I don’t know what that is, but there is no possible way it could be good.”

But Harry’s damn curiosity drove him to walking closer to the object. He walked closer and closer until he realized it was a cat—stiff as a board, eyes wide and horrorstruck.

“Mrs. Norris,” Hermione murmured woefully.

“Let’s get out of here,” Ron iterated.

“We should help.”

“Trust me,” Ron said. “We don’t want to be found here.”

Speak of the devil and he shall appear at your elbow. Just then, a roar of talk and laughter filled the corridor, and they were suddenly trapped from all angles by students, and, worst of all staff. Namely, Argus Filch.

Malfoy sneered at the trio, reading the wall and looking at the wall and the message on it. “‘Enemies of the Heir Beware’? You’ll be next Mudbloods.”

XoXoX

“Ginny?” Hermione said, walking into her sister’s dormitory. She hadn’t been at the feast, she knew that. In fact, Ginny had been missing the majority of the day. Hermione hadn’t even believed walking into the dormitory that her sister would be there. “Oh. You’re here.”

“Why wouldn’t I be?” Ginny asked hastily, slightly angry, slightly panicked.

“I-I don’t know,” Hermione said, taken aback by her tone. She got a good look at her sister’s face then, and was perplexed as to how she managed to get even paler since the last time she saw her. “you’ve just been missing a lot, especially at night. I didn’t know if you’d be

here. But I figured it was worth a shot, though, because...I want to talk to you about what happened tonight.”

Ginny’s eyes darkened. “I don’t want to talk about that.”

“We need to, Ginny.”

“We don’t have to, Hermione.”

“Well, it could happen again, and if it does, I want you to be prepared for it.”

“Hermione, things happen. Bad things. They will continue to happen despite the fact that I don’t want them to happen. I understand, and I am prepared.”

“Yes, but...we might be blamed for it. Harry, Ron, and I, that is.”

Ginny took immediate attention. “Why?”

“Well, we were sort of there, at the scene of the crime,” Hermione said, slightly offhanded, taking note of Ginny’s shudder at the word ‘crime.’ “And, well...Filch thought it was us.”

She did not respond.

Hermione grew slightly irritated. “And I’m not trying to worry you or anything,” she said pointedly. “but Harry’s been hearing this voice.”

That drew a reaction from Ginny.

“What?” she said, in the same panicked, hasty, slightly angry tone she had used when she spoke earlier. “A voice? Whose voice?”

“We don’t know,” Hermione said, puzzled. This was not a way that Ginny would behave. She would not be panicked like this—she never was. Ginny was rarely panicked, or hasty with speech or people like she was now. With every word, despite the words she was speaking, it sounded like she wanted nothing more than to get out of the conversation. Hermione found it very odd. “Are you all right, Ginny?”

“Who else knows about this voice?” she asked, avoiding Hermione’s question, still not changing her tone.

“Please, Ginny, calm down.”

“No!” Ginny yelled. “Who else knows about this voice?”

“I—I—no one, I guess. Me, Ron, you, and of course Harry,” Hermione said, now a little bit frightened by her sister.

“Don’t tell anyone else!” she shouted, and Hermione’s eyes widened in terror at the loud, angry voice she had never imagined could come out of Ginny’s mouth. “Not even Fred and George, not even Percy, not even Mum and Dad!”

“Ginny, I really don’t understand why you’re acting like this!”

“Promise me you won’t tell anyone. Promise me!”

“I promise! Now tell me what on earth is going on with you!”

“Nothing is going on with me!” Ginny screamed back.

“Ginny, for Merlin’s sake, you’re panicking over every little thing, you can’t wait to get out of any conversation, you haven’t been eating, you’ve been disappearing, going God knows where for God knows what reason, skipping classes, not doing your work, and now you’re even yelling at me! Tell me what is going on with you!” Hermione ordered. Then, softening her voice, she added, “Please.”

She did not speak for a long time, her face turned away from Hermione, who then sat on the bed next to Ginny. “How come I can’t get over it?”

“What do you mean?”

“I mean that I’m still not over it. Knives still freak the living hell out of me. Don’t even get me started on blood. The nightmares still happen. My legs still don’t work right. I can’t even ride a broom. And every

time I look in the mirror and see that scar...every memory comes back, every feeling, every fear.”

“Ginny, you can’t expect to get over it so quickly. It’s traumatic. I still haven’t gotten over what happened to me.”

“Eight years and eight weeks are significantly different periods of time, Hermione,” Ginny said, considerably calmer now. “You spent approximately two thousand, eight hundred, eighty days with the Grangers. I spent fifty-nine. That’s a big difference, Hermione. You spent almost forty-nine times the amount of time with them.”

“So?” Hermione snorted.

“So keep the proportion.”

Hermione quickly did the calculation in her head: approximately four-and-a-half years, multiplied into days, divided by forty-nine...

“Ginny, keeping with that proportion means it would take you less than thirty-five days to get over what happened at the Grangers. That’s absurd.”

“I wish it were true,” she mumbled. “I wish I wasn’t so stupid.”

“I wish you’d stop blaming yourself for this,” Hermione sighed.

“Why shouldn’t I? It’s my fault. I told Ron to tell you. I’m the one who did this. It was me who left my bed in the middle of the night—none of you pulled me out. It was me who sat on the fence that night, where I knew there were no wards—none of you guided me there. It was me who walked on that dirt road—none of you suggested it. It was me who thought nothing of huge shadows and loud, unfamiliar sounds—none of you told me not to worry. All of it was me. How much must I repeat myself?”

Hermione sighed again. “Did you ever blame yourself for what happened to me and Harry?”



“No. Not directly. I blamed myself for not discovering it earlier. It was found eventually, just not soon enough. So I blamed myself for letting it get so far.”

“Well, you were found eventually, just not soon enough. So we blame ourselves for letting it get so far,” Hermione told her. “Had we found you earlier, you would be able to ride a broom. When did the numbness start?”

“For a long time I had been unable to move,” Ginny said. “Exhaustion, pain—it all kept me from moving. I lost the feeling in my legs around one week before I was found. Though I held responsible lack of use, rather than the fact that my spine had cracked almost clean in half.”

“We should have been able to find you before that happened,” Hermione told her. There was not even a hint of doubt in her voice, not an ounce of skepticism. “It was our job, and we failed you. For that, we will never stop blaming ourselves.”

“I wish you would.”

“It’s not a matter of will,” Hermione told her. “You can will all you want for us to stop blaming ourselves, but it is not in our ability.”

Ginny remained silent.

“How are the nightmares?”

“Fine,” Ginny grunted.

“How are the nightmares?”

“Silent,” Ginny conceded.

“I’m going to stay with you tonight,” Hermione said, lying down and fixing the pillow behind her head. “Make sure you’re okay.”

“You don’t have to,” Ginny told her.

“Whether you want me to or not, I’m going to,” Hermione told her. “Think of it this way—if I have proof to believe you really are fine, maybe I’ll believe you next time you tell me.”

Ginny grumbled something in response, crossed her arms over her chest, and turned her head the opposite way of Hermione, who smirked slightly at this.

“No sneaking out tonight, okay?”

Ginny remained silent, and Hermione frowned.

“You’re sure there’s nothing else you want to talk about?”

Ginny looked back at Hermione, and her expression was a combination of an ascetic and, though Hermione might have read it incorrectly, a blithe one.

“No,” Ginny said.

“No there’s nothing, or no you’re not sure?”

Ginny sat there for a moment, looking straight ahead at nothing, before finally saying, with a sense of certainty, “No, there’s nothing.”

“I can’t say I care for how slowly you answered that.”

Hermione could see the anger developing on Ginny’s face like beads of sweat. It dripped out of her pores, coated her skin, and showed no care as to who saw it.

“You’re not my mother.”

“I know.”

“Well you’re sure as hell acting like it!” Ginny snapped. “You have your own life, Hermione, stop obsessing over mine!”

Hermione stared up at her and tilted her head slightly. “You’re a significant part of my life, Ginny.”

And silence began there. Hermione soon drifted asleep, so she did not see it when the first of the tears began to fall down Ginny's cheeks, nor did she see it when she pulled out a worn black book and began to write. She did not see when Ginny gasped at words written in the book. She did not see when she tried fruitlessly to rip a page from the book.

She did not see when Amanda Hold walked in the room.

XoXoX

1 November. They left me alone. I screamed and cried, knowing they couldn't hear me.

Amanda Hold stared at the blank book in bewilderment. There was nothing in it. Not a bloody word.

"May I have that back, please?" Ginny asked bitinglly, holding out her hand.

"There's nothing written in this," Amanda told her.

"It's charmed," Ginny said, not retracting her arm. "Only I can read it."

Amanda did not know why she felt so cynically about this—she was not a cynical person. By no means was she at all skeptical of people. When she came into the Wizarding world, however, she learned quickly that these habits were ones that one had to grow out of. Especially when the person she was being not skeptical of was Ginny Weasley.

"Okay," she said, and walked over to her trunk. "Hey, are you okay?"

"Why would you ask that?" Ginny asked hastily.

Amanda raised an eyebrow. "Well, you kind of had a breakdown when you heard about Filch's cat," she reminded her. "I just wanted to make sure everything is all right."

Ginny shot a quick look over to the sleeping Hermione for a minute before nodding.

“I’m fine.”

Why don’t I believe her?

“Okay,” Amanda said, resisting the urge to narrow her eyes. She took out her pyjamas from her trunk and left to the bathroom. Suddenly she thought of movies she saw where worried friends hid razorblades and pills from those depressed or acting strange. But she didn’t believe it was any time for that. Really, there was nothing she could do if she thought Ginny was acting strangely. Of course, she could alert Ginny’s siblings, but seeing as she had seen her sister sleeping on Ginny’s bed just then, she figured they were already aware of the situation. Therefore, she was faced with some sort of impasse. She could offer help, but she wasn’t even quite sure how much of this was true concern for Ginny rather than just her own selfish curiosity. Like a train wreck—you just couldn’t keep your eyes off it. Amanda knew she would regret it later—keeping her eyes on Ginny as she crashed. As she wrote in mysterious diaries and told lies and completely overreacted due to injured cats. As she didn’t come to the dormitory at night or to class during the day or to many meals. She knew that at some point she would be drawn toward the crash—not watching it, more walking toward it, looking for survivors, trying to nurse them back to health until someone better came along. That wasn’t something she wanted to get herself into. She wasn’t that type of person. When her family broke down, she awkwardly patted their back. When her friends broke down, she awkwardly patted their back. When a stranger broke down, she awkwardly patted their back.

And something told Amanda Hold that Ginny needed more than an awkward pat on the back.

XoXoX

2 November. He asphyxiated me so I kicked him in the nads.

The night of 1 November, Hermione had allowed Ginny peace. She had trusted that Ginny hadn’t had any nightmares Hallowe’en night,

rather than realizing that Ginny had stayed up all night long and feigned sleep upon Hermione's awakening. So Ginny fell into bed that night, thinking back on the day.

It had been filled with talk and speculation and askance glances to Harry. Gossip and accusations and keeping arm's length away from any Weasley or Potter.

Ginny had stayed away from it all. She didn't need it.

By the time Ginny fell asleep 1 November, it was no longer 1 November. All day she had dreaded falling asleep, but it had snuck up upon her, and she was now unable to stop it—no matter how many Lumos charms she lit under the covers and stared straight into.

Her dreams were not normal, even for her.

She saw a thousand flashes of images, only a few which were describable. A few included a man she had never seen before—a large man, with a moustache that he must he must have stolen from a walrus. Apparently he then ate the evidence, along with a few hippopotamuses. Most of the images in the first half of the dump that she could recall upon reawakening included the moustache man, other mysterious people, and people she only vaguely recognized, faces but not names. Words were uttered at various volumes in her ears: "Danger" "die" "kill" "power" "invincible" "pure".

The second half of the image dump included a montage of even stranger events. Disturbing ones— deaths of people; bloody, vicious, merciless deaths; violent, terror-filled revolts; untamed, wild battles; bloodcurdling screams. But there were other ones as well: masked men, a graveyard, a cave, a morbidly obese and terribly ugly woman, a locket, a goblet, a snake, and a baby.

And a flash of green ended it all.

XoXoX

5 November. A whole day of her. Torture rather than physical abuse.

Harry stared off in the distance during Defense Against the Dark Arts, thinking about what Professor Binns had told them the previous day about the Chamber of Secrets. It was an amazing tale, really, about the Heir of Slytherin and his monster. Hermione had been reluctant but morally obligated to tell Ginny of it, and she only suffered a mild breakdown.

Ginny was horribly fragile these days. They were blaming it on the anniversary—they all knew she had expected to have been better by then. They also knew, however, that this was an impossible dream. You don't get over something like this in a year. Not when you were abducted, tortured, and abused to the point of paraplegia.

Harry subconsciously traced his scar. Whenever he did this, he had a strange feeling Ginny could feel it. Like they had some strange connection. She claimed it was completely numb all the time, but he reckoned she was lying to make them all feel better about it. He wondered what it was like, to have this scar that shouldn't be there. The Healers should have been able to heal that cut. It wasn't even really that deep—only deep enough to scar. It was done only by a knife, and besides, no other cuts had left scars. Some things just couldn't be answered, he supposed. His was made by a dark curse; hers was made by a knife. And yet he felt this connection.

He turned his attention out the window. November had brought stormy skies and the constant threat of rain, a threat that the heavens never seemed to carry out.

Hermione planned to get Lockhart's signature today. They needed to find out what these attacks were, who it was. They needed to get into Slytherin to find out what secrets they could uncover. For that they needed to brew Polyjuice Potion. The only book that taught them how to do that happened to be in the Restricted Section of the library. Of course. So they needed a teacher's signature, and Lockhart was the only one not only stupid enough to let them but also inexperienced enough at Hogwarts not to suspect that they were up to something. He just hoped that he was unintelligent enough that he didn't look to see what book she planned on checking out.

Calmly he waited for the class to end, and followed Hermione and Ron up to the front of the classroom. Hermione cleverly touched Lockhart's ego, creating a story that both mentioned his books and complimented him (that was when Ron and Harry exchanged a grinning look—they continued to tease Hermione for the crush they determined she had on Lockhart), and he didn't even glance at the book she was checking out before signing the note with a very large, very obnoxious quill. Ron gaped at it and Lockhart took it as awe rather than revulsion.

"Nice, isn't it?" he said, stroking it. "Peacock. I usually save it for book signings."

They left the classroom and exchanged triumphant glances.

"Dumbfuck," Ron mumbled under his breath and they walked away.

XoXoX

7 November. I fell in and out of sleep all day, broken by a few visits and nightmares.

This was the day of the Quidditch game between Gryffindor and Slytherin, including the latter's new Seeker: Draco Malfoy. A Bludger went rogue and chased Harry around for the majority of the game. Of course, Gryffindor still won, but not without casualties: i.e., the bones in Harry's arm. First they broke, then Lockhart made them disappear.

After the game, when all the Weasleys were hanging out in the hospital wing, waiting for Madam Pomphrey to kick them out, Ginny never showed up. They, of course, worried, but figured it wasn't worth their energy anymore. She disappeared, was impossible to find, and got angry with them when they questioned her about it. It was the same game played a thousand different times with the same winner.

That night, after everyone left, Dobby visited Harry and admitted that the Bludger had been his doing.

Early the next morning, before the sun had even risen (8 November. I woke up with an ugly face in mine and had to endure him.), Harry

saw McGonagall, Dumbledore, and Madam Pomphrey crowded around the bed of another person attacked.

It was Colin Creevey.

A/n Okay...just nineteen days until I get out of school...no big deal...I can survive (no I can't).

Anyway, once summer starts I hope to get focused back on writing. I've been doing better lately but all my energy needs to be focused on getting my grades up to a 3.5 GPA from earlier in the semester. Luckily I have a sob story and understanding teachers.

So I don't like this chapter, mostly because the gaps in between me writing it were so long that I started on one thing, then picked it back up two weeks later and forgot where the hell I was going with it and had to work something out. And I'm still not quite sure about those dreams Ginny was having. But figuring all that stuff out is what history class is for.

I'm really sorry I got this out so late. Thank you for reading. Buy the new Green Day album. Read my friend's story on here called Kicking the Habit.

Ja, mata.



Disclaimer! If I owned Harry Potter I would have been able to buy food at Anime Expo last week.

A/n Okay, so I have an excuse, I swear. My summer has not even really started yet. After escaping ninth grade with a 3.5 so as not to tip off my parents that I actually don't do most of my work, I went on a much-too-long vacation touring colleges all over California and Illinois for my brother, then ended up staying much longer than we had expected in Chicago visiting family, and then my stupid friends dragged me all over the goddamn city the last three weeks, including camping for the Fourth of July, despite the fact they know I despise the outdoors. So this is actually the first time I've seen my computer in a very, very long time.

And now, the chapter.

"It's too late, I'll take ignorance over being so scared."  
--Julia Nunes, "A Welcome Vacation"

8 November. I woke up with an ugly face in mine and had to endure him.

"This is a nice place you got here," Harry snorted, waltzing into Moaning Myrtle's bathroom the next morning with his hands in his pockets and his "hiding it" expression on his face. "Is that a chamber pot or a cauldron you're brewing this in?"

"Very funny, Harry," Hermione replied, stirring. "Word is going around about Colin?"

"Yeah," Harry sighed. "They brought him in early this morning. Though amazingly, I don't think that's the most interesting thing that happened to me last night."

And that's how he got to telling the story about Dobby. That's how he got to telling the story about how Hogwarts might be closed.

"They wouldn't close Hogwarts," Hermione said.

"You never know," Ron sighed.

"Yes, I do," Hermione corrected. "They wouldn't close the school unless someone died because of this. Yes, parents might take their kids home on their own will, investigations will occur—they might get Aurors in on this. But until someone dies, they won't close the school."

"So we just have to make sure no one dies," Ron summarized. "Can't be too hard."

"It's not as easy as it sounds," Hermione reminded him. "The last time the Chamber was opened, someone died."

"We're just lucky the Dungeon of Enigmas is still closed, I heard that's a real deadly one."

Hermione shook her head. "Why, Harry, why is this funny to you?"

"Oh, come on. 'The Chamber of Secrets'? A little overly dramatic?"

"It's a terrible thing, Harry, it houses a monster!"

"Then call it something else, something to do with the monster! Don't call it the Chamber of Secrets, it sounds like a children's story, like the fairy tales Molly used to read us!"

"You're impossible," Hermione groaned. "We need to get you away from Fred and George."

She continued to stir the potion and added a few more ingredients. Ron scowled at it.

"This better work, we've gone through a lot of trouble for this," he said, thinking back to how they had to steal ingredients from Snape's private store in order to make the potion.

"If this doesn't work I have no idea how we're supposed to find out about the Heir."

Harry shrugged. "We could always go to the Annexe of Truths."

XoXoX

17 November. So long without food, water, sleep, and blood, I could no longer move. I could no longer fight back. But something in me wouldn't give up, so I didn't.

As the anniversary of Ginny's rescue approached, the Weasleys regained hope for her emotional convalescence. They knew it would not all come at once, but they slept well with dreams of her showing up to meals—maybe even eating—, of her talking, of her sleeping well, of her having a plethora, of her smile.

But their dreams were plagued by cynicism as they realized that at a steadfast pace she was getting worse and worse. She looked weaker and weaker as the days went on, and it appeared the only effort she made at all was to quickly pull a comb through her hair to cover the scar.

Fred and George had taken to trying to cheer her up. Of course, their version of cheering her up included them jumping out randomly from various hidden locations with disgustingly horrifying faces. This, of course, frightened Ginny to death, and each time they did it, she ended up having a small panic attack. Eventually, after several hard smacks to the head dealt out by Hermione, they refrained from such "cheering up" maneuvers and went with such a long and semi-predictable stretch of pranks that were so quickly thrown together and had so little thought placed in their execution that after a few days they almost seemed menial. Still, even through all this, they were not quite sure if Ginny even noticed their efforts.

Meanwhile, they had commandeered Bill and Charlie for their help, and they sent her almost daily letters, unloading on her a surfeit of information, ranging from the most mundane aspects of their life (like what Charlie had for breakfast that morning, or the annoyingly large hole Bill found in his last pair of clean socks) to important challenges in their careers (the picky diet of a newly acquired herbivore dragon,

or the Permanent Sticking Charm on the entrance to a tomb). Still, even through all this, Ginny did not reply to a single letter.

Harry, Ron, and especially Hermione had taken a healthy distance from Ginny in an effort to show that they were not trying to baby her. They talked to her regularly, but conversations were kept light. Questions were not asked, and if they seemed necessary, they were more towards the seemingly innocuous “What’s up?”s or “How’s it going?”s. Talking was kept frivolous banter, avoiding heavy topics such as the anniversary or the Chamber of Secrets. Still, even through all this, Ginny did not smile, or laugh, or go along with the stupid, meaningless conversation.

It seemed as though the Weasleys were not the only ones in Hogwarts was making an effort to help Ginny get better. Students in her year reached out to her for study sessions and homework groups. She was suddenly a very popular person when it came time to pair up in class. Her roommates kept her mind on things they deemed “happy” right before she fell asleep, apparently thinking this might somehow result in good, lucid dreams through some subgenre of the power of suggestion. Still, even through all this, Ginny continued to choose solitude, she continued to miss classes, and she continued to have nightmares.

As the weeks went on, Ginny fell apart more and more each day. And as she fell apart more and more, she did less and less to hide such a fact. Every three to four days, plus every single Sunday, Ginny was in her wheelchair. She appeared more and more tired every day, with deeper shadows under her eyes than the morning before, her eyes more and more bloodshot. Apparently, to make this happen, she had to remove blood from every other location in her body, as she was paler and paler as the days passed. She came to fewer and fewer meals, turned in less and less homework in worse and worse quality, showed up to class later and later, and, every Monday and Friday night, stayed in the hospital wing, as it was a given that Madam Pomphrey would deem her not well enough to escape care.

One Friday night, (20 November. I could no longer speak for dehydration.) Madam Pomphrey was in her office filling out tedious paperwork on the first year she had treated that morning who had

hexed his hair pink. Just as she was about to sign her name, a short, muffled scream came from the next room over, followed by a loud thump.

Madam Pomphrey rushed into the hospital wing to find Ginny sitting on the floor next to her bed, rubbing her head and mumbling profanities.

“Miss Weasley?”

Ginny looked up and cleared her throat, jumping to her feet. “S...sorry.”

“Are you okay?”

She nodded profusely in response. Madam Pomphrey narrowed her eyes.

“Do you need a Dreamless Sleeping Draught?”

Ginny shook her head now. “No, I’m fine, thank you.”

Madam Pomphrey nodded and turned around to go back to her office. Quickly, suddenly, and in a panic voice, however, Ginny stopped her.

“Madam Pomphrey!” she cried out. The matron turned on heel to face the girl.

“Is everything okay?”

Ginny nodded. “I just...who’s Professor Slughorn?”

She raised an eyebrow. “Professor Slughorn? He was the potions master here right before Professor Snape. Headed Slytherin, too. Retired...what? Twelve years ago, nobody’s really heard from him since. He spent his career developing connections to people he knew would at some point become very important. No one could ever quite decide if that was a good thing or not.”

“Oh,” Ginny said, and mumbled something under her breath that Madam Pomphrey could not hear. “Thank you.”

“Of course, dear,” she replied. “But may I ask where you heard the name?”

Ginny stared at her for a moment before conceding, “I read it in a book.”

“A book?”

“Written in the margin of a library book I read. Nobody else I asked knew who he was.”

“Right well,” Madam Pomphrey shrugged, walking back to her office. “Glad to help. Go to sleep, now.”

Madam Pomphrey sat down in her office, frowned at the smudge she had created on her parchment after her earlier fright, and wondered how it would be possible for any student to manage to write in a library book with Madam Pince watching over everyone’s shoulders.

XoXoX

29 November. My eyes started to fail me now. Large parts of this day are missing, though I don’t think I was simply asleep.

30 November. Two months in captivity. I gave up. This is the day I did not fight back.

1 December. My body deteriorated to the point where I fell unconscious and did not wake up until I was in St. Mungo’s a week and a half later.

XoXoX

2 December. Charlie and a team of Aurors found me.

Hermione Weasley slept not a moment the night of 1 December/2 December. She fretted for hours, wondering what the anniversary of

Ginny's rescue would due to the girl. Based on the looks of her brothers the next morning, she assumed she was not the only one who had lost sleep over the matter.

Much to their chagrin, disappointment, and about a thousand other depressing adjectives to describe emotions they were not even quite sure they could name, Ginny was sitting at breakfast, staring off into space, with nothing on her plate, dark shadows under her eyes, a deep frown etched into her skin, and a glazed over, slightly vacuous expression painted on her face.

And when Charlie's owl appeared a second later, she didn't even open it. She did, however, read Bill's.

This worried them all.

XoXoX

And so as time passed by and Ginny continued on her downward spiral, and frantic letters from siblings and parents were answered in any way possible, and concern for the Heir and suspicions on Malfoy grew, and as Christmas neared, stress mounted. All the Weasleys opted to stay behind for the Christmas holiday, a fact which deeply upset Mrs. Weasley, but one they felt necessary, as the Polyjuice Potion would be ready and everyone else was moving far away from Hogwarts at their given chance to escape being possibly petrified.

No other attacks had occurred, but on 17 December, a disturbing secret was revealed.

Lockhart had reckoned that it would be nice to teach the students of Hogwarts to defend themselves with a little dueling club. This was a reasonable, logical sentiment—however, it would have been more reasonable and more logical had it been taught by a competent teacher.

Still, Harry, Ron, and Hermione attended. And when Harry was pitted in a duel against Draco Malfoy, well—things got ugly.

It ultimately resulted in Malfoy's incantation of "Serpensortia," a curse which conjured a big, ugly, fat snake. The Millicent Bulstrode of snakes. Harry, stunned as to what to do, was shocked when Snake Millicent approached Justin Finch-Fletchley—a second year Hufflepuff whom Harry had learned from a Herbology lesson was a Muggle-born—and looked as though it was planning to attack the boy. So, naturally, Harry tried to get it the fuck away from the kid.

This was apparently not a good idea, as Harry spoke Parseltongue to this snake, who continued to "attack" Justin, until Professor Snape killed it, staring at Harry in awe. Harry, who was not aware he had spoken any sort of other language, was uberly confused as to why everyone was staring at him as if he had just decapitated a baby.

It was only after Ron told him that in the Wizarding world being a Parselmouth was tantamount to decapitating a baby that Harry began to understand and, well, panic.

The next day, Harry found Justin Finch-Fletchley and Nearly Headless Nick petrified.

XoXoX

Harry was avoided all weekend by his peers until Monday—the end of term, and the train back to London. That way, everyone was away, and he could pretend to be normal for a few days. The Weasleys had Gryffindor tower all to themselves, but it was strange for all of them—in reality, it was the first Christmas they had spent away from Molly and Arthur in a very, very long time. For Fred, George, Percy, Ron, and Ginny, it was their entire lives, and for Harry and Hermione, it was since the Sir and Ma'am Chronicles. It was odd to be away from them, but more pressing matters were on hand.

The Polyjuice Potion would be ready on Christmas night. They could finally get to the bottom of this all, question Malfoy from the inside.

When 23 December rolled around—the day Ginny returned from the hospital—Ginny was not to be found. To show what excellent self-control they had, no one went to find her.



Such was not the case Christmas morning.

XoXoX

Hermione woke up Christmas morning, saw the large pile of presents at the foot of her bed, and frowned. The last five Christmases, Hermione had opened her gifts at the same time as her little sister, they had taken turns, showing off and giggling and altogether being happy. They traded sweets and Ginny complained of the color of her Weasley sweater. It was the most important part of the day for Hermione—not the presents themselves, rather, being able to share the moment with Ginny. So, when she woke up and realized she did not have the luxury of being in the same room as her little sister this year, she was momentarily taken aback. This was not a situation she had previously considered.

So she got up, slipped on a dressing gown, and walked silently over to the first years' dormitories. She knocked softly, but nobody answered. She was aware that Amanda, Sarah, and Holden—Ginny's dormmates—had gone home for the holiday, and the chances that Ginny was still sleeping ranged from about zero to none.

This was Hermione's incentive behind ripping open the door to the dormitory, scanning the inside, and even calling Ginny's name several times. Still, she found nothing.

Ire spread through Hermione's bloodstream like heroin. She turned on heel, slammed the door shut, and stomped over to the second year boys' dormitories, where Fred and George had joined Harry and Ron for traditional Christmas morning sweet-swapping.

"Hey Hermione!" Ron beamed, speaking loudly and enthusiastically "Happy..." Then he saw the look on her face, and grew significantly quieter and less happy—his smile even disappeared. "Christmas?"

"Ginny's gone," Hermione snapped. "This is it. I'm not taking this anymore. I don't care what might happen, I don't care if I upset her, I am finding out what the hell is going on with that girl!"

“Hermione—” Harry started, but she was already stomping out the door.

XoXoX

After changing into jeans and her Weasley sweater, Hermione sat on Ginny’s bed, waiting (patiently?) for her little sister to return. And, at about ten-thirty, return she did. She came in, rubbing her eyes and taking panting breaths, covered in sweat and white as the snow that collected on the windowsill.

“Hermione?” she croaked. “What are you doing here?”

“Why the hell were you not in bed this morning?”

Ginny looked at her strangely. “I-I was—”

“DON’T YOU DARE MAKE UP SOME RIDICULOUS EXCUSE!” Hermione roared, and Ginny’s eyes widened, seemingly her only reaction to Hermione’s screaming. “I want to know the truth. Where have you been going? Why are you getting so much worse even though the anniversary is completely over? Why aren’t you eating, why aren’t you sleeping, why are you suddenly skipping class? Why do you suddenly leave a room without finishing your sentences, why do you keep acting so paranoid and weird and for the love of Merlin, where are you going and why won’t you tell us the truth?”

Ginny snorted and grabbed a package from the end of her bed—the one she knew contained her sweater. She ripped it open and pulled the sweater over her thin frame, frowning at how large it was on her, how it hung like a tent. With a sigh, she faced back to Hermione.

“You really want to know the truth?”

A/n Okay, so many of you might know this, but you don’t like me for keeping the plotline of Tom Riddle. But the way I saw it, I was trapped into it. Lucius Malfoy had a brand-new incentive to plant the diary on Ginny after the Muggle Acts, and she was in desperate need of an outlet. But don’t worry. As I’ve said before, and as I’ve heavily hinted in this chapter, I have an idea. Next chapter, you will find out how I

plan to play it out. I have some summer assignments for stupid classes that shouldn't take me long, but I'll try to get the next chapter out soon, as I already have most of it written.

Until then, ja mata.

CHP40